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THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY



FRANCE.

THE "CHANDOS CLASSICS."

THE

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

FRANCE.

BY

LEITCH RITCHIE.

With Illustrations by T. Landseer.



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PREFACE.

THE Romance of the History of France is one of a series of historical tales founded on the history of England, France, Spain, Italy, and India, which obtained great popularity when first published.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

CHARLEMAGNE.

WHEN part of the extensive and beautiful country of Gaul was still in the feeble, enervated grasp of degenerate Rome, it was thought necessary to hire the arms of the neighbouring barbarians to defend the government against the barbarians it had subdued. Among the Germanic tribes thus brought into a sort of alliance with Rome, were those of the Franks, whose province it was to guard the banks of the Rhine. This restless and warlike people at length began to throw looks of desire upon the fertile plains it was their duty to defend ; and when the genius of Clovis, one of the Salian kings, had united some of the tribes into a body powerful enough for the adventure, the Franks in the year 486 set forth upon their path of conquest.

Though coming among the last into the field of all the hordes of northern barbarians who overthrew the Roman empire in the west of Europe, the Franks were destined to outstrip every one of their competitors. Clovis defeated Syagrius at Soissons, made himself master of the Roman provinces in Gaul, and received the titles of Consul and Patrician from the Emperor for his pains. He allied himself by marriage to the Burgundians, who had fastened upon the territory watered by the Rhone and the Saone, and subsequently made them tributaries to his throne ; he beat the Swabians, who hung upon his rear, at a place near Boulogne, and in consequence of a vow made during the battle, became a Christian ; he attacked Alaric the Visigoth, whose spoil had been a large portion of the south of Gaul ; and to punish the laxity of his religious principles, for Alaric was an Arian, overthrew his empire, and shut him up in a narrow strip of country between the Rhone and the Pyrennees ; and finally he put to death the other independent chiefs of his own nation, and died in 511, sole king of the Franks.

The glory of this conquest expired with the conqueror ; the empire was divided among his four sons ; and for nearly two centuries reluctant history wanders with disgust and contempt among the crimes and follies of a multitude of obscure princes, till she finds them sunk through every intermediate stage of villainy into confirmed idiotism. The last of the "*rois fainéants*," or *insensati* (idiots) of historians was Childeric III. ; for Pepin, surnamed Le Bref, unsatisfied with the real sovereignty enjoyed by his father and grandfather in the quality of Mayors of the Palace, mounted the throne in 752, and commenced a new dynasty of the kings of France. The principal events of

FRANCE.

importance which took place from the time of Clovis until this period were, the final subjugation of the Burgundians, the concession of the Emperor Justinian to the Franks of the right of empire over Gaul, the birth of the feudal system, and the defeat of the Saracens, who invaded France, by Charles Martel. Pepin, when dying, divided, agreeably to custom, his kingdom between his two sons, Charles and Carloman; but the younger following his father soon, Charles, in 771, found himself alone on the throne of France, and at liberty to begin that splendid career which ultimately procured him the title of Magnus, or,

CHARLEMAGNE.

772.—He received in marriage a daughter of the King of the Lombards, then a powerful prince, divorcing his former wife to make room for her. Soon after, he divorced this princess also, and taking the part of Rome against his ex-father-in-law, marched against him, captured Pavia his capital, and dethroned the king. The iron crown of the Lombards was placed upon the head of the conqueror in 774, by Pope Adrian.

The Saxons, whose crimes, in the eyes of Charlemagne, were their valour and freedom, next felt his vengeance. He converted all he could to the religion of Christ, and made the converts his slaves. Those whom he could neither convert nor enslave, he massacred by thousands, or transported from their homes to other parts of his dominions. Witikind, however, their glorious chief, was not to be crushed very easily, and it cost the Franks a thirty-three years' war to subdue this brave and simple people. Gottfried, King of Denmark, afforded them refuge for some time, but in the end they were obliged to conform both to the religion and laws of Charlemagne. It is worthy of remark, that among the pirates who afterwards issued from Denmark and the countries adjacent to lay waste the soil of France, there were probably included many of the descendants of those martyrs of liberty.

During this period, he carried his arms into Spain; but the time of the Saracens, who then occupied the country, was not yet come.

While constantly traversing Europe sword in hand, this extraordinary man was not the less attentive to civil affairs: he established schools, where all the accomplishments of the age—namely, reading, arithmetic, and church music were taught; and invited learned men from all quarters to come and civilize his subjects. He assembled his Champs-de-mai at Aix-la-Chapelle, where the nobles, bishops, and some freemen discussed the Capitulaires which he promulgated as laws; nor while thus occupied in establishing order in the country which his victories had aggrandized, was he less solicitous by the practice and inculcation of the domestic virtues to humanize its rude inhabitants. The close of the eighth century saw Charlemagne the greatest King in Europe, both in fact and in name; for in its concluding year the Imperial crown was placed upon his head by Pope Leo III.

Bertha;

OR,

THE COURT OF CHARLEMAGNE.

J'aim' bien loiaument,
Et s'ai bel amy,
Pour qui di souvent,
J'aim' bien loiaument.
Est miens liegement,
Je le sai de fy :
J'aim' bien loiaument,
Et s'ai bel amy.

CHATELAIN DE COUGL

THE palace of Aix-la-Chapelle was in sight. Its stupendous buildings, broken here and there to the eye by intervening groves and eminences, filled so considerable a space on the horizon as to give the idea of a city of domes and towers; the loftiest of which was surmounted by an immense apple of pure gold, as if the gorgeous pile had been meant to be enlightened by a sun of its own. A confused murmur of exclamations arose from the procession when the end of this long journey at length appeared to draw so near; and the eyes of all were eagerly bent upon what might as yet have seemed but a palace of cloud-land. The eunuch, unwilling to compromise the dignity of his mistress by a show of vulgar wonder, commanded a halt when they had reached the brow of a beautiful hill from which a view of the whole surrounding country could be obtained; and after allowing his followers sufficient time to gaze, proceeded to arrange the

ranks and to remove as far as possible the appearance of carelessness and disorder which is usually produced by a long journey. He then instructed them to move calmly and loftily on, mindful at once of the dignity of her from whom they came, and of the respect with which it was necessary to enter the presence of one of the mightiest potentates of the earth.

When the order was about to be given for a renewal of the march, a line of black figures on horseback was observed approaching from the quarter of the palace at full speed. The embassy continued their halt, and watched with admiration the seemingly interminable succession of the file; for when the commanding officer had already reached the foot of the hill, his followers extended in an uninterrupted line to the very gates of the buildings. The black appearance of this formidable body was caused by the armour with which every individual was clothed from head to foot, and which had all the effect of the uniform of later times;* they looked indeed, as they sat grimly on their saddles, like statues of solid iron; and even the horses were defended by plates of the same metal, over which robes of rich cloth hung almost to the ground. Their offensive arms consisted, besides a sword, of a thick lance, which was not thrown like the darts, or angons of their fathers, but retained in the grasp after striking; and, wielded by these iron hands, it seemed a more formidable weapon even than the battle-axe which it had displaced.† When the challenge was given to the strangers in the customary form of the time, and the eunuch had replied, as was expected, that his errand was to carry salutation from the mighty Princess Irene, Empress of the East, to the renowned King of the French, the visitors were invited to approach the palace of the great Charles,‡ and the black horsemen marshalled the way as a guard of honour.

* Soldiers did not begin to wear uniform generally till under Louis XIV. in 1672.

† The French abandoned, in a great measure, the use of bows and arrows when they established themselves in Gaul.

‡ This prince did not receive the title of Magnus, or Charlemagne, till after his death.

"I pray thee, Sir," said a private cavalier attached to the Greek embassy, riding up to the commanding officer of the escort when the march was begun, "tell me, I pray thee, whether the Princess Bertha,* whom thou knowest we are come to demand in marriage, be as beautiful as she is described by report." The soldier stared haughtily at the querist for a moment, and then replying coldly, "Thou wilt see anon," spurred his steed, and rode forward. The Greek, with an angry, or perhaps contemptuous capriole, leaped to one side, and, riding up an eminence, appeared to contemplate for some time the procession, so rich in variety of manner and costume, and partaking in such brilliant contrast of the pageantry of war and peace. Then perceiving the road bend round the corner of a forest, to avoid the unequal ground within, and seeming to have been rendered reckless by the relaxation of discipline permitted on a long journey, or else protected by his insignificance from the interference of the chiefs of the cavalcade, he forsook entirely the line of march, and dived into the thicket. The shade of the trees and the trickling of water rendered the air pleasant after a hasty march, although it was now near the beginning of winter; and the stranger, whose blood was quickened not only by the warm pulses of youth, but by the curiosity natural in a traveller arriving in a new and interesting quarter, gave his horse the rein, and galloped on at the will of the proud animal, so far as this was unchecked by the intervention of barriers too high to be overleaped. He had not proceeded far when he heard the voice of some one singing cheerily in the wood, and he pulled in his bridle to listen. The song seemed to be one of the war hymns of the Celts, popularly known in France since their collection a few years before by the King, and the manly and well-tuned voice in which it was pitched accorded well with the appearance of the singer, who soon after emerged from a jungle and crossed the path of the Greek stranger.

* The title "princess" is not given to her in her capacity of King's daughter. The King and his high nobles were indiscriminately styled Princes; and women of lofty rank, whether royal or not, were Princesses. The terms, nevertheless, for the sake of distinction, are used in this work more frequently than otherwise in their modern sense.

He was a remarkably tall man in the prime of life, and portly and well-formed in his figure ; although, critically examined, his neck would have appeared too short and thick, and his waist a little more prominent than is necessary to the line of beauty. His dress, which did not bespeak him to be raised many steps above the common rank of the people, consisted of the ordinary frock, or tunic, descending to the knees, made of blue cloth, and ornamented with a silk border ; above this, on account of the season, was a tight vest of otter skin with the fur on ; and over all a plain cloak, not of the sweeping length worn by the nobility, but short and homely. His legs were covered with a sort of long hose, or pantaloons, fastened crosswise with particoloured garters. His pace was grave and firm, with nothing either of meanness or pretence ; and when he turned his head at the noise made by the horseman, there seemed to be so much good nature, approaching to joviality, in his countenance, that the stranger, checking his steed, and resting his lance upon the ground, hailed him in the manner of one who would willingly expend a little while in conversation.

"I pray thee, fair Sir," said he, "if thou be not hindered for time, tell me whether the Lady Bertha be as beautiful as report speaks her."

"What is that to thee?" counter-questioned the forester sturdily, turning a pair of large bright eyes and a long aquiline nose towards the querist.

"I belong to the embassy of the Empress Irene,"* explained the stranger, "who seeks the French princess in marriage for her son Constantine ; and I would fain know whether this Bertha of thine is likely to prove a jewel worthy of being set in the crown of the East."

The cavalier of the short cloak turned a look half of surprise half of ridicule upon the Greek. He appeared to be about to make some severe reply ; but checking the sarcasm which rose to his lips, he turned away with a slight but courteous obeisance.

* Who usurped the throne after the death of her husband Leo.

"Patience, patience," said he, "thou wilt see anon," and he walked leisurely away, without turning his head. The young cavalier, with flashing eyes and rising colour, debated for a moment whether he should not follow him; but looking for a longer space of time, not unadmiringly, at the lofty figure and slow and stately step of the stranger, he pursued his journey.

He had not ridden far before he fell in with a second pedestrian, a young man about his own age. His dress and accoutrements, which proclaimed him to be a sportsman, consisted of a doublet trimmed with grey fur, a short green coat fastened with a leathern girdle, tight buskins, couteau de chasse, bow and arrows, and ivory horn suspended from his neck by a chain of polished steel. He was tall and well-formed, and showed the bearing of a cavalier of birth and distinction.

"Ho! fair Sir," cried the Greek stranger, "tell me, I pray thee, if thou be not hindered for time, whether the Lady Bertha be as fair as men say she is.

"Saint Maurice!" exclaimed the sportsman, jumping suddenly round, "what is that to thee?" and with a look of menace, mingled with curiosity, he strode up to the inquirer.

"Nay," said the latter, "I did but ask the question as one attached to the mission of the Empress Irene, who sends to demand the Princess for her son Constantine; and I am right curious to know whether this Bertha of France is likely to prove a jewel worthy to be set in the crown of the East."

"Know then, Stranger," said the sportsman, with imperious heat, "that the Princess Bertha, set in the crown of the East, would show like a rich diamond mounted in worthless lead."

"It may be so," replied the Greek good-humouredly: "the comparison is difficult, I own, between lifeless metals and lovely ladies."

"And know farther," continued the other, "that the she-wolf of Greece must match her cubs lower than in the House of lordly France!"

"Say'st thou?" cried the stranger: "on that quarrel I am for thee. The House of France is only too much honoured by the

condescension of the Empress. Sir Frenchman, thou liest!" and leaping from his horse, he threw away his lance and drew his sword. The sportsman, on his part, was not less nimble in disencumbering himself of his bow and arrows; and having substituted a more warlike blade for the *couteau de chasse*, the two cavaliers went to it with equal dexterity and good will. Their swords, however, had not clanked many times together when both the weapons were beaten down at one stroke by a third party.

"What! tilting within the purlieu of the palace?" said the gigantic cavalier of the short cloak, whirling round the combatants a branch of a tree weighty enough to crush the best helmeted head that ever appeared in field. "Here is goodly discipline! By the holy St. Maurice! if the King comes to know of this contempt of the Royal authority, I would not give a grain of sand a-piece for your lives!—What, Angilbert, art thou mad? This stranger may have some slight excuse in his ignorance of our localities and customs; but thou, thou knowest well whom thou bearest!" Angilbert put up his sword promptly yet sulkily.

"As for the customs and localities thou talkest of," said the Greek in a towering passion, "I neither know nor care; I did but say——"

"Say nothing," interrupted Angilbert, "if thou art wise: what is said is past, and for the love I bear to arms, I would not see thee come to mischief through other means than cold steel and fair fighting."

"As for this House of France," shouted the choleric Greek, "I say again——"

"Bah, bah! hold thy tongue, man," said Angilbert, "and return to thy post—if one is trusted to so empty a head."

"Hark thee, Sir Frenchman," demanded the stranger in a calmer tone; "do the customs of France in all cases thus tie the tongues of its visitors? *Why* may I not speak? Answer me that. Wherefore must I not discourse with my lips?"

"Thou wilt know anon," said Angilbert, walking rapidly away, and disappearing in the thicket.

The tall mediator was by this time at a considerable distance,

striding swiftly along, while he used the branch with which he had extinguished the fray as a walking-staff. The Greek, leaping upon his horse, galloped after him, apparently with the purpose of repeating his interrogatories ; but just as he was about to overtake him, he saw him enter by a gate that had appeared a part of the interlaced shrubbery, which in this part of the forest served for an inclosure. The tall cavalier did not answer a word to the shouts of the curious stranger, but, locking the gate deliberately after him, walked on without turning his head ; and when his pursuer reached the enclosure, he found it at once too high to be overleaped, and too strong to be broken, and was therefore fain to return to the road by nearly the same route as he had come.

By dint of hard riding, he rejoined the cavalcade before it entered the palace, and in contemplating the animated scene around, soon forgot the annoyance which the churlishness of the French cavaliers had given him. Immense galleries, surrounded by pillars, ran all round the building ; and in particular the portico, extending from the palace to the chapel, appeared to be finished with extraordinary art. Such was the extent of these galleries that they afforded shelter to the whole of the troops and inferior officers attending the court. They were divided, however, into regular compartments, each of which was appropriated for the assembling place of a particular company or class of men. To the left was seen the Royal guard, constantly under arms ; and in the same compartment numerous officers attached to the court amused themselves with pacing up and down between the marble columns, and retailing the news of the day while waiting for orders from their superiors. There, and in the other galleries, stoves were placed at convenient distances, and were seen surrounded by crowds of retainers, clients, and strangers, whom official duty, business, or curiosity, had brought to the palace.

In the interior, stupendous halls for the administration of justice, the reception of ambassadors, and other purposes, conferred an air of princely grandeur upon the building ; and beyond these was the private apartment of the King, into which access could only be obtained by entering through seven doors. This chamber, never-

theless, was so contrived that Charles could see every individual who entered or quitted the palace ; and hence, in a great measure, the strict order and decorum which prevailed throughout, where the officers were every instant aware that they were, under the eye of the King. Beyond this was the wardrobe of the palace, for the white habits of the newly baptised, and the robes of the domestic officers, a new suit of which, made of serge or cloth, was presented to them every Easter.

A staircase led downwards to the stables, the menagerie, the aviaries, and dog-kennels ; and here the spacious baths, surrounded with flights of marble steps and magnificent couches, exhibited in their hot springs the temptation which had induced the King to pile around them these wonders of art and industry. The great gallery leading to the church, which gave its name to the palace, was supported by columns of marble, the materials of which had been brought from Rome and Ravenna. The doors and rails of the chapel were of gilt bronze ; and it was ornamented with marble pillars, beautiful mosaics, and vases and candelabras of gold and silver in gorgeous profusion.*

It was only by means of hurried glances and questions that the inquisitive Greek saw and learnt so much ; for when the cavalcade had entered the palace, the pomp and bustle increased to a degree which seemed to have an almost stunning effect upon its boldest members.

The door of a magnificent hall was at length thrown open, and the embassy, floating slowly in, prepared to pay homage to the mighty chief of the French. A man of a portly and warlike presence was seated on a throne at the farther end of the room, dressed in superb robes furred with ermine. He was surrounded by a thousand lords clothed from head to foot in cloth of gold, and in that regal state and proud, bold bearing, looked "every inch a king." This personage, however, was only the Constable of the Palace ; and the ambassador, agitated and confounded,

* Eginhard, in Vit. Carol. Magn. ; in præmat. Alcuin. de Carol. Magn. l. 2. Collect. Duchesnian, p. 188 ; Antoine Mieville, Voy. dans l'Anc. France.

passed on to another hall, of which this appeared to be but the antechamber.

Here a spectacle of the same kind, but more magnificent in its details, awaited the strangers ; and if they had not been prevented the ambassador and his whole train would have fallen on their knees before the Count of the Palace in his ordinary hall of justice. In the third hall the Grand Master of the table presided in still loftier state ; and in the fourth the Grand Chamberlain appeared to leave no higher step to the very summit of regal splendour.

When the fifth door opened, a kind of hushing whisper was heard, and the voices of the crowd, nay, their very breathing, sank into profound silence. The procession entered the hall with no other noise than that produced by the rustling of their robes, the beating of their hearts, and the soft, measured tread of their feet upon the mingled flowers and rushes which carpeted the floor. Bucklers, cuirasses, and other arms, were suspended from the roof, and the walls were hidden with what might have seemed the riches of a world. On a seat, without arms or supporters, the throne of the ancient sovereigns of France,* sat the renowned Charlemagne, with twenty diademed kings standing around him, and the high nobles of his empire. Crown on head and sceptre in hand, robed in purple and ermine, and blazing with gold and gems, the conqueror, noble in aspect, and almost gigantic in stature, seemed to be something more than man ; and the Greeks, confounded by everything they had encountered, bewildered by a display of power and wealth they had never seen before even in dreams, and dazzled by the glory which was attached throughout the world to the name of the hero, were unable to support a presence so majestic, and fell on their faces upon the floor.

The young cavalier alone of all the embassy remained erect, and this apparently more from surprise than philosophy. He stared at

* So constructed to signify that a king must be able to support himself without assistance.

the King as if he had been a spectre ; and at length, wiping the perspiration from his brow—

“ ’Tis he, ’tis he indeed,” he muttered. “ I know him by the great eyes, the long nose, and the bull neck. The peasant lord, or the lordly peasant—he of the short cloak and the heavy arm ! By the holy Virgin ! this churl Angilbert is no ungenerous foe, to lug me, yea or nay, out of the lion’s maw—into which, blisters on my tongue !—I would fain have thrust myself. As I live, there he is, bolt upright behind his master, and as fine as jewels and cloth of gold can make him !—Hark ye, fair Sir, who is that handsome cavalier,—he who stands next the King ?”

“ His nephew, Angilbert.”

“ Nephew ! Oh ye Saints ! so much the better ; for that is within the forbidden line of consanguinity, and Angilbert, no doubt, bristled up so fiercely for the honour rather of his cousin than his love.”

Before the young Greek had ended his meditations, the eunuch, who represented on this occasion the Empress of the East, had recovered his presence of mind, and delivered the greeting of Irene with a good grace. The reply of Charles to the powerful princess who demanded his daughter for the wife of the heir of her crown was as favourable as might have been expected either from the courtesy or ambition of his character ; and the embassy was at length dismissed from the presence, every individual overwhelmed at once with the condescension of the King and the splendour of his court.

The young Greek, ever unmindful of the form of etiquette, stood absorbed in the gratification of his curiosity as the pageant dissolved before his eyes, and at length found with a start that he was the only stranger remaining in the room. When about to follow his companions hastily, a voice called to him, which he recognised with a thrill as that of the King—

“ Ho ! young Sir, a word with thee ;” and obeying what in that place was a command, he walked to the other end of the hall, where the Monarch stood in conversation with his courtiers. Charles then opened a small door behind, and beckoning him to

follow, disappeared ; and the Greek, muttering an invocation to his patron saint, followed him in silence into the passage. They walked on for some time almost in darkness, till the King, suddenly throwing open a door, slapped his visitor familiarly upon the shoulder. "Thou art impatient," said he, "to know whether the merits of the Princess Bertha equal her reputation ; and I deem it a duty of hospitality to gratify so laudable a curiosity. Wait in this apartment, and thou wilt see anon." The Greek entered the room, and the door was shut behind him.

Ardent as Charles imagined the youth's curiosity to be with regard to his daughter, it was for some time entirely forgotten, so much was he absorbed in examining the magnificent chamber where he now found himself. The few articles of furniture with which the customs of the age and people had garnished their dwelling-houses, and which indeed consisted of nothing more than stools, benches, and tables, here made up for their want of variety by the extraordinary richness of each individual piece. The stools and benches* were covered with fine carpeting, and three of the tables were of silver, and the fourth of gold. The silver tables exhibited the most rare and beautiful workmanship, the surface of each presenting a picture in carved work. On one the city of Rome was displayed ; on another that of Constantinople ; and on the third the whole world.† The table of gold, of a plain and solid construction, appeared to be used in common by the King, for on it lay his implements of writing, books, and other articles. The books, which indeed formed nearly his whole library, consisted of some of the works of Saint Agustine, the Psalms of David, a history of Jerusalem, and certain chronicles of the ancient kings of the Franks. These, and more particularly the City of God of Saint Augustine, of which he was a great admirer, Charles was in the habit of having read to him every day after dinner, to prepare him for his customary nap of three or four hours.‡ Notwithstanding the display of writing materials, there lay a glove beside them

* Bancs ; these were used at table, whence the word *banquet*.

† Poesies de Fortunat.

‡ Eginhard, in Vit. Carol. Magn.

stained with ink, which gave rise to a just impression on the part of the visitor that this great prince had not yet succeeded in learning the mystery of the alphabetical signs, and adopted, therefore, the practice common in his age, of using for a signature a daub made with the end of his glove. A sword, with the hilt carved for sealing letters, and a wine-cup of gold, enriched with sapphires, completed the furniture of the table; although the latter was probably more for show than use, Charles, unlike his subjects, being said to be a decided enemy to drinking.*

While the stranger was engaged in examining curiously these tools of royalty, he was startled by hearing the breathing of some person near him; and looking up, he saw a lady gazing at him with a mixture of surprise and bashfulness.

She was of the age when the greenness of youth is ripening in its last summer into womanhood. Her stature exhibited the golden mean between short and tall; and her complexion was so brilliantly fair, and her eyes so dazzlingly bright, that the young Greek was uncertain for a moment whether his imagination had not conjured up one of those ærial forms which exist only in the day-dreams of poetry. In another moment she moved—retreated; the sapphire cup fell from his hand, and he stepped forward as if to catch the vision ere it faded. Gracefully bending, sweetly smiling, and brightly blushing, the Maid of France gained the door; her eyes lightened for an instant upon his heart, and she melted from his view.

The Greek smote his brow with his two hands; he gasped for breath; his thoughts in vain demanded utterance;—"Bertha! Bertha! Bertha!" was the only sound emitted by his trembling lips. "Bertha! Bertha! Bertha!" he repeated, in a succession of sighs rather than of breathings, and sank upon his knees on the floor. At this moment the door opened, and an officer of the court entered.

* His enactments against this sort of excess show what was its extent among the people. Challenges to drink are forbidden in his Capitulaires; as also *drinking healths to the dead Saints*. The latter practice was anathematised by a council of Nantes; and Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, wrote against it.

"Sir," said he—"Oh Jesu!" starting back at the singular posture of the stranger.

"Oh Bertha!"

"The King desires thy company——"

"Bertha!"

"In the great bath."

"Bertha! Bertha! Bertha! Why—what—who art thou? what dost thou want?"

"I?—nothing. It is the King who wants thee, and I am commanded* to wait upon thee to the great bath, where he is." The Greek followed his conductor like a man in a dream; and when at length he found himself in the midst of the thick vapours of an immense bath, where he could see a number of naked figures plunging in the smoking waters, he began to doubt whether he were really awake.

The bath, supplied by the celebrated hot mineral springs of the place,* was so large and so deep as to admit of many persons swimming in it at once. It was completely surrounded by a flight of marble steps, which conducted to the water's edge; and here and there luxurious couches were placed for the accommodation of the bathers. Our adventurer, however, had little time for examination; his conductor, finding him stand idly staring around, snatched off his cloak without ceremony, and then began to tug at his tunic. The stranger, accustomed to undress himself, and seeing that it was here absolutely necessary, then pulled off his clothes without resistance; and in another moment found himself swimming in hot water with the King of France, his sons Charles, Louis, and Pepin, and several officers and soldiers of the guard.†

"And the Princess Bertha?" said Charles, laughing:—"what

* These baths, before the time of Charlemagne, had been fitted up by some Roman lord or governor, named Granus, and the place, therefore, was known by the Latin name of Aquis-Granum.

† In præmat. Alcuin. de Carol. Magn. Collect. Duchesnian; Eginhard, in Vit. Carol. Eginhard assures us that not one of the company usually assembled in the bath swam better than Charlemagne.

think'st thou of the little French maid? Is she a jewel worthy to be set in the crown of the East?"

"Ay, in the crown of Heaven!" cried the Greek. "Angilbert was right; the proudest diadem of the world will show but as a worthless lead beside that glorious gem!" The fond father appeared to be as much delighted with the enthusiasm of the stranger as the latter was with the frankness of the King and the beauty of his daughter; and we shall now leave them for a space, to follow to her apartment the fair subject of their conversation.

Bertha retired to her chamber, wondering at the fancy her father had taken to send her so stealthily, without form or introduction, into the presence of a stranger; but attributing his conduct, in this instance, to an ebullition of the playful and social feelings he so often manifested in his intercourse with his children, she resumed her work without bestowing further consideration on the subject. This work was nothing more than spinning, which was an accomplishment, it should be said, not shared by every young lady of the time; but Charlemagne is allowed in history to have been particularly attentive to the education of his children. Bertha, also, inheriting her father's love of music, knew how to while away the hours of her task with singing; and on the present occasion, instead of the church hymns, which had been her usual amusement ever since the King had kindled a religious war by importing the Italian tunes, she sang one of the *lais d'amour* of the day, which probably resembled more nearly the song adopted as a motto to this historiette than any modern composition.

The natural melody of her voice, like the wind "breathing on a bank of voilets," stole new softness from the subject, till at length it seemed to become languid with its own richness; and the concluding lines of the lay fell in broken and dying gusts of harmony from her lips—

"Est miens leigement,*
Je le sai de fy—†
J'aim' bien loiaument,
Et s'ai† bel amy."

* He is my liege-vassal—he is devoted to me for life.

† D'assurance.

‡ J'ai.

The silence which followed the song was interrupted by a whispering sound at the door, and supposing one of her maids was there, she desired her to come in. The door slowly opened, and a man entered the chamber.

"What, Angilbert! cousin! How now, sir? said the maiden, blushing half with modesty, half with anger; "in my own apartment!"

"Thou may'st forgive it, Bertha," said Angilbert, taking both her hands gently and mournfully; "it is for the last time!"

"In the name of the Virgin, what means this? Thine eyes are wild, and yet thy cheeks pale; thy hands burn and tremble, and thy step is feeble and uncertain! Art thou unwell, my cousin, my dear Angilbert? Yet, haste, O haste thee away from a spot so perilous; I will follow thee to some more public room; we are lost if thou art found here."

"We are lost, at any rate," replied Angilbert; "but worthless as life seems to me now, I would not endanger thine for an empire. The King is in the bath, and we are safe for at least an hour."

"Then tell me what has happened to pale thy cheek, my Angilbert! Art thou ordered for Rome? or is the blow dealt through me? Say in what worst alternative my lot is cast, and whether thy faithful Bertha must break her heart in a convent or on a throne."

"Thou hast said it. The Greek Empress has sent to demand thee for her son Constantine."

"But my father will not consent; he loves me too well to part with me; no,—never think it, Angilbert!"

"The King will sacrifice his affection to the interests of his country and his daughter. He *will* part with thee, Bertha."

"But not to her—not to the House of Irene, that cruel and usurping Queen. No, no,—never! never! never!"

"Alas! I have just come from the audience—the affair is settled, and thou art lost to Angilbert!" The blood forsook Bertha's cheek, her eyes closed, and she sank fainting into his arms. Distracted with terror, and ignorant what to do, he laid her down upon the bench, hung over her pale form, fanned her face, pressed

her hands, and finally was on the point of calling aloud for aid. The warm stream of life, however, returned to flow through its paradise of beauty, and as his mistress opened again her bright eyes, Angilbert clasped her in his arms, and showered upon her brow, and cheeks, and lips, the kisses of his love and his despair.

The hour allowed by the lover for his visit passed quickly away; and in mingling tears and vows, they had as yet neglected to consider seriously the situation in which they were placed, and to inquire whether any possibility of escape existed, however wild and desperate.

Another hour passed away more quickly and less sad; and the lovers, whose only lights were each other's eyes, at length perceived that the evening had come down in silence and darkness.

"So much the better," said Angilbert, in reply to the startled remark of Bertha. "Under cover of this friendly shade, I can retire in safety when I will; let us then steal one other hour of mournful joy, and then—then, sweet, good-night!"

The third hour passed away

—more swift

Than meditation or the thoughts of love,

and they again looked round. The thick clouds had rolled from the face of the sky, and the moon stood full and bright in the serene heavens. It was as clear as day and as silent as night; and as the horn of a sentinel on the ramparts echoed through the court, the lovers, feeling that the moment of separation had indeed arrived, glided with noiseless step to the window to look together upon the beautiful moon.

An extensive open court was before them, across which lay the way of Angilbert, and the only egress from this part of the palace. The court was surrounded by piazzas, and the moonlight streaming upon the marble pillars, made them appear of dazzling whiteness. Below, however, was spread a carpet still more purely white; for during the hour of darkness a heavy fall of snow had descended, and the whole pavement of the court was covered with what might have seemed a sheet of virgin silver. There was not a breath of air to ruffle this beautiful surface; and as the women of the royal

family—all but Bertha—had long since retired to rest, with their whole household, its purity was unsullied, and its regularity unbroken by human foot.

"Thou tremblest, oh, my love!" whispered Angilbert; "the cold of this heavenly night has fallen upon thy heart. Farewell, farewell,—retire to thy repose; and for me, before seeking my sleepless couch, I will offer up a prayer in the chapel to its holy protectress, the Blessed Virgin, for thy health and life." Trembling till the agitation seemed a nervous affection, but clinging to his embrace with the strength of despair, Bertha raised her eyes, which had been fixed in speechless terror upon the court, and her lover saw that her face was as white as the snow itself. She at length pointed with a shudder to the snow; and as a terrible thought struck like lightning through the heart of Angilbert, he smote his breast and groaned aloud.

"A man's footsteps," cried he, "to be seen in the morning in the midnight snow—and from thy apartment! Wretch that I am, I have destroyed her whom I love more than life!—Hark! that distant noise of doors and voices—the King is retiring to bed; the door of egress from the court will be locked; nay, thy father may come here himself, as is sometimes his wont, to ask if thou art asleep! What is to be done? There is not a moment to be lost; lend me thy shoes—alas, they are too small! Quick, quick, set thy woman's wit to work—arouse thee, bestir thee—awake, awake, for, by the holy Virgin, I am duller than an owl, and more helpless than a babe!"

The noise they had heard was indeed the breaking up of the court; for Charles, sleeping enough in the morning after dinner to satisfy nature, cared not about the time of retiring; and, even when in bed, was in the habit of receiving visitors, and transacted business during a great part of the night.* The Greek stranger had had the honour of seeing him sup, when he observed with surprise the temperate habits of so great a prince. The supper consisted of only four dishes, principally roast game, brought to

* Eginhard, in Vit. Carol. Magn.

table on the spit by the chief huntsman ; and during the repast the King drank wine only three or four times, getting up without ceremony as soon as his appetite was satisfied.* The affair, however, was conducted in other respects with all befitting pomp and circumstance. Besides the candelabras with which the room was furnished, attendants stood round the table with great wax candles in their hands ; and the tasselled table-cloth was laid double, and folded with the nicest regularity.† The drinking cups were of gold and silver, and some of them enriched with precious stones.

“ And now,” said the King, rising, “ now that we have finished the more important business of the day, let us make the tour of our palace, as our brother the Caliph Aaron of Persia‡ does of his city, to ascertain that proper order is kept throughout. The Count of the Palace will have the goodness to remit to my hearing such cases as have stood over from intricacy or other causes from the forenoon ; and all visitors on pressing business may be informed that in half an hour I shall be in bed and ready to receive them.” Charles then led the way from the banquet hall, followed at a distance by some of his officers, and more closely by the Greek stranger, with whom he continued to converse familiarly on subjects connected with the affairs of the East, and the adventures of his journey.

They thus visited every station of importance in the building, challenged the sentinels, and looked out into the appearance of the night ; and the stranger at every step had fresh cause to wonder, not only at the extent and appointments of the place, but at the admirable discipline established throughout. The King was at length about to retire into his own apartment, and had already bid good-night to his companion, when suddenly recollecting something—

“ A word with thee,” said he ; “ let us walk this way alone, and

* Eginhard, in Vit. Carol. Magn.

† *Candida præponant niveis mantilia villis.*”

Nigellus, de rebus gestis Ludovici Pii.

‡ Haroun Alrashed.

make the tour of the inner court, where the moon seems to shine so bravely on these marble piazzas, that will look, I'll warrant thee, like columns of ice rising from their pavement of snow. What! thou hast not all the curiosity to thyself; I, too, am impatient to ask questions, and I will pray thee to give me some tidings of this Constantine of Greece, who sends so far for my daughter." When they had reached the inner court, they stood still for a moment to admire the regularity of the buildings, and the extreme whiteness and smoothness of the snow which covered the pavement.

"And now of this Constantine," resumed the King. "What manner of man is he?"

"Why," replied the stranger, "he is a man,—'faith, he is the son of an Empress, and that is saying much as the world goes."

"Thou art in the right," returned the King; "but is he brave in action, agreeable in person, and honourable in purpose?"

"He is as brave as his sword, which cares not a jot about the quarrel, so there be but fighting; his person offends not when his holiday suit is on; and some say he is more honest than wise."

"Truly, a flattering portrait! My daughter will be but too happy in such a husband. That is Bertha's apartment across the court, that with the open window—a dangerous neglect, by the way, in weather like this; do thou stand here while I go and shut it; and if she be awake, thou wilt be able to tell Constantine how sweetly the voice of his mistress sounds at night."

"Stay, Sir!" said the Greek, seizing hold of the King's mantle. "Hold! hush!"

"How! What! Ha! It was a voice—it was, in faith! Think'st thou? Tush! 'Tis she herself. She is awake, and waits for me; this is my custom,—stand aside."

"Hush! Look!"

"That is a shadow on the wall, indeed! She is up; she has not gone to bed. Thou art right—it is a shadow."

"Two—two!"

"Ay! Say'st thou? Right again; stand aside—it must be her woman."

"A man's, by this light!"

"St. Maurice!" muttered the King, grinding his teeth; and as his hand sought the hilt of his sword, the trappings rattled with his agitation.

The two shadows disappeared from the inner wall; and as the next instant the door opened, the Greek drew back the King, per force, into the shade of the piazza.

All was silent for some moments, that appeared ages to the witnesses; till at length a singular spectacle presented itself. The Princess Bertha appeared emerging from the doorway, faltering under the weight of her cousin Angilbert, whom she carried in her arms! Panting—tottering—swaying to and fro under the unusual burthen, she advanced slowly and painfully across the court, till at length she succeeded in setting down her lover under the piazzas beside the astonished witnesses, where no tell-tale snow could receive the print of his feet. The King's sword flew like lightning from its scabbard, and without uttering a word he would have cleft the skull of Angilbert in twain, had not the Greek suddenly caught him in his arms.

"Fly for thy life!" cried he, during the fierce but short struggle that ensued. "Away, if thou be'st a man! Hie thee—haste—vanish, in the name of the foul fiend! What, art not gone? Wilt not stir? wilt not budge? Oh, dolt-headed animal!—Most clement King; most just and merciful Lord! hear before thou strikest! One moment—a space that might serve to wink in! Jesu—I can no more! There, go an thou wilt; go, with a fury to thee! I'd as lief hold a hungry lion!" And Charles, with a mighty effort, dashing his athletic opponent upon the pavement, sprang to his victim.

"Strike here!" cried Bertha, throwing herself suddenly between—and her father's sword, which he was unable wholly to check in its furious descent, would have drunk the blood of her shoulder but for a thick gold chain which intervened.

"Harlot!" exclaimed the King, in a voice hoarse with passion; "speak, ere thou diest! Tell me of my shame, that I may curse thee ere I kill thee!"

"I am no such name," said the Princess proudly; "and the tale

is easily told. Angilbert came to my chamber this evening to bid farewell to hope and me. It was I who detained him; I who kept him a prisoner with my woman's weakness and my childish tears! Must I say more? I have loved him from my childhood; I love him now; and I *will* love him ever! I too am of the blood of France!" And she raised her haughty head, like a swan in the waters, and looked with his own proud bright eyes in her father's face.

"Noble lady!" exclaimed the Greek, with a burst of enthusiasm: "there spoke the soul of—"

"An empress?" said the King, sheathing his sword.

"Ay, of a greater—of a high-minded and a true-hearted woman! For me, my task is accomplished; my mission is ended. I have seen the gem too precious for an imperial crown; and although he who sent me may never hope to wear it, it will yet be to him, from my description, as the star of his thoughts, to light his steps to fame and honour. Farewell, renowned King! Farewell, brave Angilbert! Farewell—Bertha!" The stranger's voice sank suddenly as he pronounced the last farewell, and bending on one knee, he kissed the hand of the Princess and withdrew.

Charles, after musing some time, the expression of his face lost in the shade of the piazzas, strode abruptly to his daughter and Angilbert, and joined their hands; then kissing them both on the forehead, he turned round as abruptly, and left the court without uttering a word. The next morning it was discovered that the Greek stranger, attended by two cavaliers of the embassy, had quitted the palace before anybody was stirring; having left for Angilbert a magnificent sword, with the following superscription, which astonished, it was said, everybody but the king:—

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS THE PRINCE ANGILBERT,
FROM HIS FRIEND, CONSTANTINE OF GREECE.

tention on the part of the crown, the functionaries, as might have been expected in the state of society, became more and more independent of the government they affected to serve ; till at length, under the feeble sway of Charles le Chauve, they made their offices hereditary. The kingdom thus formed a constellation of separate governments, of which the king was the centre,—with more however of dignity than of power, for among separate governments there is no law but that of strength. The king was the vassal of God—the great officers were the vassals of the king—and under them also were infinite subdivisions of vassalship, till the system reached the villeins, who were subjects, or rather slaves, of the lord. The fief was granted on condition of military service from the vassal, and aid and protection on the part of the chief. The basis of the whole system was fidelity, and this generated a spirit of rude honour which paved the way for chivalry.

877.—Charles was succeeded by his son Louis le Begue, and Louis III. and Carloman followed, whose names are quite sufficient for an abstract of history.

884.—The crown was then offered to Charles le Gros, who reigned in Germany with the title of emperor. In his reign the Northmans, thinking that Paris was ripe for another plunder, sailed up the Seine and besieged it. It was valiantly defended for two years by Eudes, Earl of Paris ; but when at length the Emperor arrived with succours, terrified at the sight of the wild sea-people, he bought their retreat. A fear of another kind soon took possession of him—the fear of the Devil, and he died mad ; when the crown was given to Eudes, in the minority of Charles le Simple son of Louis le Begue, who after the death of Eudes reigned alone.



The Last of the Breton Kings.

'Tis no default in us ; I dare acquite
Thy maiden faith, thy purpose pure and white
As thy pure self. Cross planets did envy
Us to each other, and Heaven did untie
Faster than vows could bind.

Like turtle doves
Dislodged from their haunts, we must in tears
Unwind a love knit up in many years ;
In this last kiss I have surrendered thee
Back to thyself ; so thou again art free.

HENRY KING, BISHOP OF CHICHESTER.

CHAPTER I.

IN the autumn of the year 818, a small body of Frank horsemen, spurring across the frontiers into Brittany, were stopped in their course by the intervention of a thick jungle. Some road, no doubt, communicated with the interior, where lay the stronghold of the rebel King ; but the leader of the party, although apparently well acquainted with the ground, after searching for a considerable time, found himself completely at fault. In this predicament, Witchaire, who was a young cavalier of a lofty and gallant presence, invested with the insignia of a royal envoy, ordered his companions to encamp upon the spot, and await his return.

"I will dismount," said he, "and seek alone these rash, unhappy men, while the clemency yet holds of our Louis, so justly

surnamed the Debonnaire—and God grant that I may be in time to avert the blow which will draw down upon a gallant nation the destroying thunders of the empire !”

“The blow is already struck,” said one of the party, a rude, stern-looking soldier. “The tribute has been refused point-blank, and Morvan* elected king ; and I know the old warrior too well to imagine that he will give up one inch of his new empire for Frank or devil. There is no help for it ; we must sweep this wandering people into the sea from whence they came—a consummation they have been long striving for, and which they richly deserve at the hands of the son of Charlemagne.”†

“Nay, nay, friend Coslus,” returned the other, laughing, “now thou art over-just—and all on one side. When valour is reckoned sinful, and conquest becomes a crime in the eyes of Heaven, even thou and I, I fear, must turn our horses’ heads, and seek again the dark forests of our ancestors beyond the Rhine. As for Morvan, I too know him well. He is as brave as steel, but as pliable—as fierce and remorseless as a famished wolf when the sword is out, but slow and diffident to draw a weapon so fatal. There is one, also, near him, whom I knew in earlier youth—whose gentle counsels—whose—whose—”

“Thou wouldst say his daughter,” suggested Coslus ; and the young cavaliers smiled and looked slyly at one another, as the blood mounted into Witchaire’s face.

“Ay, his daughter,” cried the young chief, springing from his horse, “and brighter eyes than hers illumine not the empire of Charlemagne ! Drink a health, gallants, to the fair Matilde for my sake when I am gone ; but drink not more than one : look warily around ; if ye sleep, let it be with only the left eye ; strike not if ye be not struck—and so, farewell till the morrow.”

* Mezeray calls him Morman, after some older writers ; the *Chroniques de Saint Denis*, Marmanons ; and the chronicler who supplies most of the materials of this story, Murman ; but *Morvan*, which is used by other authors, sounds better.

† Thirty-two years before, the Breton princess were compelled by force of arms to swear fidelity to Charlemagne.

Witchaire then leaped lightly over the hedge barrier, and disappeared in the thicket.

The Franks speedily arranged their wandering camp as well as they might, and obeyed to the letter the commands of their officer touching the drinking of the Princess's health. After this, however, there behoved to follow, in natural succession, the healths of the mistresses of the whole party; and a joyous evening would probably have been passed in consequence, had not Coslus reminded them that they were on enemies' ground, and, since the departure of Witchaire, without any token by which they might testify to inquirers the peaceable object of their visit. This hint was sufficient to keep on the alert even the daring spirits of which the band was composed; for the enthusiastic bravery of the Bretons, heightened almost to madness by the desperation of their present circumstances, was well known to the whole party.

The revolt indeed of the little kingdom at such a crisis was in itself considered to be an indication little short of insanity; and the speculators could only refer it to a peculiarity of temperament in the wandering isles-men, children of the sea from the beginning, and sudden, wrathful, and unstable, like the sea, to the end. However this might be, the small body of Franks encamped on the frontiers of the territory conceived it to be their duty to take every precaution for their safety which the science of war suggested, and they passed the night in the same species of uneasiness which might be felt by brave men shut up in a forest plentifully peopled by wild beasts.

Witchaire in the meantime discovering, through all the art that had been used to disguise it, a route so well known in happier times, sped hastily on in the direct road from his own demesne, which lay near the frontiers, to the residence of him who, in the short space since they had last met, had become, from a powerful subject, an insecure and feeble king.* The path was broken up

* Ermoldus Nigellus, de rebus gestis Ludovici Pii. This chronicle is in the form of a poem, about which nothing is very remarkable, except the barbarity of the Latin, and a curious and most elaborate acrostic, in which the author has

by pits, intersected by hedges, and obscured by the shadows of the forest trees; but Witchaire, led on by the light of love, needed nothing else to guide his steps or nerve his mind.

On emerging from the thicket, an extensive marsh offered a still more formidable opposition, and it required all the skill and sagacity of the Frank to pilot his steps in safety through a wilderness of trembling earth and treacherous water, where the tracks had been carefully obliterated. The last obstacle was a broad river, which proved nearly fatal to the visitor—for the ford had been deepened; and ignorant of this circumstance, and encumbered by his armour, Witchaire was nearly swept away by the current.

On landing on the opposite side, he was immediately challenged by a sentinel with bended bow; who, when his errand was told, blew a blast upon the clarion, which was instantaneously echoed from at least a hundred posts. When the envoy found himself on the top of an eminence, which rose almost from the water's edge, he beheld a scene of such unwonted bustle, and even magnificence, that for some moments he was uncertain whether it was not all a dream.

In the middle of an extensive and almost circular plain, defended on all sides by the natural obstacles he had himself encountered, stood the lonely fortress of Morvan.* Here and there a clump of trees, or a small, smooth lake, studded the surface of the plain; where Witchaire well remembered to have seen, on a still, clear night, the wild deer bounding down the neighbouring eminences, to drink or pasture in the moonlight. At such times, a blast from some distant clarion would fall with a rich, sweet cadence upon the ear; or a rude pipe upon the hills, where the shepherd guarded his flock from the wolves, mellowed by the

enshrined his name. Nigellus gives the fullest account we have of the revolt of the Bretons; the *Annales Eginhardi*, *Chroniques de Saint Denis*, and other ancient works, passing over with coldness and brevity an event which is unquestionably one of the most interesting of the age. He wrote a little before the year 826.

* Ermold. Nigell.

influences of the hour, would steal upon the charmed senses like a serenade of love. Nor was there wanting one to whom he could whisper, how sweet is this music ! how beautiful these swelling hills ! how calm these little lakes, where the only motion seems to be the trembling of the moonlight ! Matilde leant upon his arm, her head bent sidelong towards his, to drink in the low, delicious tones which are the vehicle of the language of passion ; her fragrant breath was upon his cheek, her voice sank into his trembling heart, and her eyes, more beautiful than the stars of heaven, lighted up a paradise of soul in the midst of what was already a paradise of earth.

Such was the picture which, for one instant, filled the mind's eye of Witchaire, as he stood upon the eminence, looking down into the Eden of his heart. The next moment he started, and passed his hand quickly before his eyes. Gaunt and grim stood the fortress in the middle of the plain, surrounded successively by all the warlike defences known in the age. Ditches, walls, palisades, mounds of earth and stones, and hedges, "shagged with horrid thorn," closed it round almost from the very gaze of an enemy ; while within this formidable circle lay the building itself, black with age, and dinted, but not shattered with war, like a couchant beast of the forest awaiting its prey. The small lakes were now connected with each other by broad ditches or canals, over which drawbridges were thrown, and the numerous clumps of trees, hung with banners and bucklers, served as tents of war. Large bodies of armed men, both on foot and horseback, were seen exercising in various parts of this vast lawn, and single cavaliers, spurring at full speed from one party to another, or conveying orders from the castle. Echoing, meanwhile, from a hundred different points of the scene, the signal clarion stirred the soul with its shrill, piercing voice ; while the glancing of the armour in the now setting sun, and the waving of the banners in the evening breeze, gave a restless animation to the picture, which could not fail to be communicated to the nerves of the spectator.

Witchaire felt his heart bound within him at the sights and

sounds of glorious war ; while descending the eminence, his step became firmer and haughtier ; his eyes flashed lightning around, and he appeared more like one who criticised the air and appointments of a worthy foe than a messenger of peace and mercy. The next moment, however, as a very large body of Bretons, their armour turned into burnished gold by the sun, appeared in the distance winding among the hills, in a direction *from* the castle, his feelings changed.

“ O God ! I am too late,” he exclaimed. “ My rash, unhappy friend !—Gallant hearts, on what sure destruction are ye rushing ! —Matilde ! Matilde !” and he strode forward with a speed which compelled the escort that had been sent to conduct him to give their horses the spur.

An expression of surprise mingled with admiration passed across his face, as in striding along he cast a soldier’s glance among the fortifications surrounding the castle, and heard the party challenged by the sentinels almost at every step ; but nevertheless he did not slacken his pace till he gained the door of the banqueting-hall. He had been lighted up the black, dark staircase by numerous pages bearing large wax-tapers in their hands ; and on the landing-place now appeared a profusion of lights, and a crowd of serving-men of all descriptions, forcibly reminding him, by the splendour of their dress, of the change which had taken place in the rank of their master.

When the hall-door was thrown open, the visitor was almost blinded by a blaze of light proceeding from a vast number of wax-tapers, borne by men armed to the teeth, who were posted at the sides of the room. The company consisted of a crowd of noble-looking cavaliers, and a smaller number of dames and damsels of high rank. Among the former were seen few flowing cloaks, and few fur trimmings and cloths of gold and silver, the trappings of the customary denizens of a royal court ; they were mostly cased in well-dinted armour from top to toe, the iron face of war being concealed in few instances by anything more than a scarf, and their swords rattling by their sides as they walked. The ladies, on the contrary, were arrayed in all the bravery of the time ; their

robes being of scarlet or purple silk, and their ears, neck, bosom, arms, and fingers blazing with gems which emulated the lustre of their eyes. At the farther end of the room, on a raised seat resembling a throne, in the midst of a train which thus blended the magnificence of a court with the stern rudeness of a camp, sat the King of the Bretons.

"Welcome, noble Witchaire," cried the monarch. "I am right glad that thou comest at feasting-time! How fares my brother Louis, thy royal master? What news doth he send?"

"The illustrious and most clement Louis," said the envoy, "by the will of God, Emperor and King, and thy master and mine, sends thee greeting, Count of Morvan." A loud murmur arose among the nobles; but the King, extending his arm, answered calmly, though sternly, "Hold, Sir; mend thy speech, I pray thee, which is halt and disjointed at the very outset. My brother Louis, since thou requirest a prompter, is King of the Franks; I am King of the Bretons—and the King of kings, I fervently trust, is the only master of both."

"Till thy homage," said Witchaire, "has been paid to the Emperor, thou canst no more be King of the Bretons than I."

"By what right does the Emperor claim my homage?"

"By the right of conquest, by the fealty sworn by the Breton princes to Charlemagne and his successors under the edge of the sword."

"Extorted oaths," replied Morvan, "are binding neither in the law of God nor man. We blush for the stain thus brought upon the Breton name, and we are willing to give our dearest blood, if nought else will avail, to wipe it out.—Hast thou yet another plea of right to urge?"

"Yes, the right of honour and of principle. When thy wandering nation, with no other territory than the rude waves, and no other counsellors than the ruder winds, were first driven upon these fertile shores, they sold their swords and their spears to the Roman empire. For a spot of land whereon to rest their weary feet—for pleasant homes on the firm and fragrant earth—for green fields, and sweet waters, did the outcasts of the sea become as children,

yea as bondsmen to the empire, they and their descendants for ever. How answer ye? Was it not so?"

"Thou hast said it," answered Morvan.

"It is the empire, then, which claims the duty of its children and its bondsmen; it is the empire which, in the person of the son of Charlemagne, demands an acknowledgment of sovereignty due at once to honour and to gratitude."*

"Sir—and my good friends and counsellors, and all here present," said the King, rising with dignity, "this is a point which we must not fail to answer. The right of conquest endures no longer than the power to conquer. This principle is exemplified and evidenced daily before our eyes, in the intercourse of man with man as individuals, as well as in the instinctive habits of the brutes; and there is no race of people upon earth more learned in its doctrine than the free and warlike Franks. The Franks, however, unfortunately for us, are themselves conquerors, and, like all other men, they find it difficult to apply to their own actions the rule by which they would so readily, so indignantly, try those of their neighbours. For this there is no help; the difficulty arising not from the blindness of ignorance, but from that of self-love;—no help, save the arguments of policy or expediency—and when these two fail, the sterner logic of the sword.

"But we are accused of want of honour and want of gratitude! Sir, and my dear countrymen, when Conan, surnamed Meriadec, led to these coasts his brave warriors of the sea, from that famous island which has bestowed its name upon our Little BRITAIN, and the indomitable spirit of its clime upon our sons, he found the country more rude and unsettled even than the ocean he had traversed. The tempest of war raged throughout the land; every man's hand was against his neighbour; and the imperial bird of Rome was against all, his beak and talons dyed in barbarian blood—an eagle in the fight, and a vulture after! Our wandering Conan purchased from the Roman a home and a country, and

* Only eighteen years before the date of this conference, Charlemagne was crowned at Rome, the people exclaiming—"Long live Charles, the august and pacific Emperor of the Romans, crowned by the hand of God!"

the price was paid in British blood. The vassals, notwithstanding, of the empire,—and it was then no dishonour to be so,—the princes of our people continued to pay the homage they had bargained for, till the very shadow of that once mighty Colossus had faded from the land. Brittany was then free in name, as it ever was in fact; for the interference of the sovereign state had not even extended to lending assistance in its wars, which—notwithstanding, were waged wondrously well, as the Visigoth and Aquitanian witnessed.*

“Well, Sirs, at this point of my story, a barbarian prince, whose ancestors had issued from the forests beyond the Rhine, spreads his arms over the face of the earth, and rolls like a vast unbroken wave from North to South, overwhelming in his course our state, like the rest. In a little while we raise our heads from the dust, and look round with shame and rage. The deluge has rushed past to the overthrow of mightier thrones; and, collecting our resources, and concentrating our strength, we look warily round for an opportunity to retrieve our fall. The opportunity comes.—an individual is called to the post of danger,—the man who now addresses you, even I, my friends,—and we raise up once more the standard of our country, and shout from one end of the land to the other—‘We are free! we are free!’”

At this point of the oration, the enthusiasm of the King communicated itself as if by magic to the assembly who heard him, and his words were repeated with terrific vehemence by the Bretons—“We are free! we are free!” The attendants on the stairs, and the guards in the lower hall and in the court, caught and passed successively the sound; and it was heard echoing from troop to troop on the wide plain, and dying away like distant thunder among the hills.

“Again the barbarian comes,” continued the King, with a vehemence which seemed impatient of the interruption. “His tread is

* Such is the bare outline that may be gathered from the relations of the ancient Breton historians; their filling up is deformed by chronological blunders and palpable fictions,

upon prostrate kingdoms, but at the frontiers of *our* country he stops short, and exclaims—‘Hear me, O Bretons, and give ear to your rightful lord! Bow down your necks, for I am he to whom, in the beginning, ye swore homage and fidelity—crouch, strangers of the sea, for I am Emperor of Rome!’” A roar of indignation from the assembly mingled with the concluding words of the speech; and the hoarse torrent of sound was heard, as before, rushing down into the plain, and dying away on the hills beyond.

“Art thou answered?” demanded Morvan in a calmer tone. “Hast thou yet another plea?”

“Yes, yet another,” replied Witchaire, while his eyes were observed to glisten with that watery brightness which stands for tears in such eyes as cannot or dare not weep. “I have yet another plea; but it is one which, at a moment like this, would neither be felt nor admitted. I have heard, O King! with admiration the lofty sentiments which have fallen from thy lips, and with both pity and admiration the wild applauding chorus which followed from the lips of thy people. The words, however, which to them sounded like the heart-stirring trump of freedom, seem to me but as a decree of doom, a mandate of death and despair breathed over their devoted heads, and by thee, even thee, O King! their lord and father. But I am silent; my errand is sped—I can no more. Farewell!” and Witchaire, sinking upon his knee and bowing his head, paid unconsciously the obeisance to honour which he had denied to royalty. The light faded in Morvan’s eye as the envoy spoke, and a shade passed across his brow; but seeing him prepare to withdraw, he started suddenly, and descending from the throne, caught him by the hand.

“What, in such haste!” he cried. “By heavens, it shall not be! We may both perform our duty right well as King, or King’s messenger, without forgetting our feelings as men. Thou shalt even lodge with us this night, my friend, and partake of such poor fare as a beleaguered king can give. What, ho! the wine-cups! Daughter!—Where is the Princess?—Stand forth, Matilde, and welcome thine old companion.—I promise thee, Witchaire, there are eyes as bright in our woodland court as those that illumine the imperial halls of Paris or of Aix.”

"My lord and father," said the Princess, advancing with her train of Breton ladies, "I trust thou wilt permit us to retire. We, who are only women, are but little skilled in the state policy, or form, which can teach even honourable men to welcome as a friend the advocate of all that is base and vile, the apostle of cowardice and slavery!" Witchaire gazed upon the apparition which stood before him, all other feelings for a time lost in wonder.

Could the single year that had passed since he saw Matilde have wrought so remarkable a change? Modest, almost bashful, simple, shy, reserved—shrinking like the wild violet from the gaze of the very sun; and yet innocently, indeed childishly playful, like a young fawn upon the hills; but like it, only playful when remote from the steps of man—such had been Matilde! And yet the sweet, clear voice which now sank into the very soul of the listener, was hers in spite of its disdain; the queenly form which stood before him was that of Matilde, only enriched by another summer; in her air still reigned the graces of youth, heightened into the majesty of womanhood; and even the flush on her cheek, and the lightning in her eye, although so changed in their character and expression, were tokens that his heart recognised. When she had spoken, she swept past him like a spirit; but in passing there was something in her disdainful glance which raised a tempest of recollections in Witchaire's mind.

Bewildered, heart-stricken, he stood gazing after the phantom, and for some time a chaos of moving figures and floating tapers swam before his eyes, till at length, starting as if from a trance, he found himself alone with the King in a smaller apartment, where wine-cups glittered on the table, and light shone from artificial instead of human candelabras.

For some time he mastered his feelings so well as to discourse in common language, and on common subjects, with his royal host; but the minds of both seemed distant from the purpose of their speech. Witchaire at length, as his thinking faculties threw off by degrees the illusions which bound them, and which had had the effect of almost persuading him that he was in reality the

abject being the disdainful words and looks of Matilde had represented him, became doubly anxious to perform successfully the sacred task he had undertaken.

"Thou wouldst know," said he, interrupting suddenly the stream of conversation, and reverting to the subject which engrossed the thoughts of both—"thou wouldst know whether I have not yet another plea to advance against the course thou art about to adopt? Alas! besides the law of conquest, and the laws of honour and gratitude, which I am bound at least by habit—say prejudice, if thou wilt—to uphold, are against thee, there is yet another—the law of humanity. Couldst thou but see the host of our valiant and holy Emperor, already assembled on the frontiers of thy country—where the Frank, whose steel thou already knowest, and the Aquitanian, who knoweth thine—the Burgundian—the Saxon with his broad quiver at his back, and the fair-haired Swabian from beyond the Rhine, all crowd and circle, like birds of prey, awaiting the signal which gives up to their hunger the carcase of thy devoted nation!

"I tell it thee, not as the envoy of my King, but as the friend of Morvan, that thou wilt have no more chance of escape than the dove in the talons of the vulture. Dost thou reckon on the dissensions that have arisen in the mighty empire of Louis? These, on the first war-cry of the son of Charlemagne, will sink into peace; and already, indeed, many of the combatants, apparently incited to strife by nothing more than the restlessness of their nature, have loosened their rebel grasp from the throat of their neighbours, and rushed with loyal zeal to join the battle-chase of their King.—Dost thou dream that thou wert called to the throne merely to turn into action the counsels already adopted by the chiefs of thy country; and that thus, whatever may be the event, thou art a guiltless instrument? Shame on such delusion! The King is the soul of the nation, who puts the members into play, and who must answer in this world and the next for the result. Oh, when that wild shout arose to applaud thy eloquence, how many tones were blended in my ear! The crackling of the burning cottage, and the hissing of blood among its embers—the

cry of the violated maid—the shriek of the childless mother!”—Morvan covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

“Is it ambition,” continued the envoy, “which goads thee on in so inhuman a career? Wouldst thou lord it, though only over the dying and dead?—wouldst thou be a King, even if thy dominions were but of ravaged fields and burning villages? Say but the word, and I swear, by the faith of a soldier, the crown shall be fixed to thy head more securely than is this castle to the firm earth beneath!” Morvan smote the table with his clenched hand, and turned a look of fury and disdain upon the torturer.

“Forgive me, my friend,” said Witchaire—“forgive me, noble Morvan! I have power to offer an inducement far more acceptable to thy generous spirit. When thou hast effected the salvation of thy country, and reared for thyself an eternal throne in the hearts of thy people, and in the memory of their remotest posterity, thou shalt descend, or rather *ascend*, into the proud though peaceful rank thou hast quitted for a crown of thorns. The lineal descendant of the ancient Breton Kings shall be recalled from Lombardy, and assume the throne under protection of the Emperor; and thus thou shalt enjoy the honour, untarnished by the faintest breath of calumny, of having saved a gallant nation from destruction.” Morvan dashed the untasted goblet upon the floor, and walked up the room with rapid but agitated strides. Witchaire was about to speak again, to follow up the impression he perceived he had made; but the King silenced him with an impatient gesture.

“What time,” asked the latter, “art thou permitted to afford me for decision?”

“To-morrow’s sun,” replied Witchaire, “must rise upon the fate of Brittany.”

“Meet me here, then, when the clarion from the tower tells that that sun has risen. Good-night; good-night.”*

It was very late when Witchaire left the King’s presence, and the hour appointed was so near at hand, that it did not seem to

be worth while to retire to bed at all. He determined, therefore, to pass the time upon the castle terrace. The night was beautifully clear, and although some signs of warlike vigilance were still apparent in the measured tread of the sentinels, and the glancing here and there upon the plain of armour in the moonlight; the comparative stillness of the hour was in remarkable contrast with the scene presented in the same place a short time before. Witchaire, agitated by his late important interview, and his hopes and fears of the result, and deeply wounded by the manner of his heretofore mistress, strode up and down the terrace in no enviable state of mind; till at length he heard his name pronounced from an open window by his side, and looking round, saw one at least of the objects of his meditations.

Matilde had put off her courtly robes, and now appeared in the plain dress and long garlanded hair of the portrait enshrined so sacredly in her lover's memory. The flush had vanished from her cheek, and the lightning from her eye, and with head bent and arms crossed upon her bosom, she stood silent and motionless for some time after he had approached the window. Witchaire doubted for a moment whether it was she who had called, but at length addressed her with a grave obeisance.

"Princess of Brittany——"

"Envoy of the tyrant Louis——"

"Matilde!"

"Witchaire!"—She clasped her cold hands in his, and as she bent out of the window, her tears fell upon his upturned face.

"And to meet thus!" said Witchaire.

"Even thus would I have us meet!" replied Matilde. "No womanish fears shake my frame, and no maiden blush paints my cheek when I say that I loved thee, Witchaire—yea, that I love thee still. It is not, however, the envoy of Louis whom I love, and it is not the Princess of Brittany who loves. Let us be for one moment, one short, last moment, Witchaire and Matilde, that young and heedless pair who once wandered hand in hand upon these moon-lit hills.—But, no! These were beings who lived—who *can* live, only in a world of imagination."

"Yet let us be these beings once more, my Matilde. Oh, yet once more let us return to faith and to happiness! Let us wander, as we were wont, upon these moon-lit hills, and believe again that in them we see the horizon of our world!" Matilde pointed to the hills, and after a lingering gaze, turned her eyes upon her lover.

"There," said she, "lies thy path; and here," stepping backwards into the apartment, and pointing with her left hand to the darkness behind—"here is mine!"

"Hear me," cried Witchaire, raising his voice: "return, I command thee! Thou hast no right—thou art not thine own. Whither I go, there thou shalt go also; and where I remain, even there shall be thine abiding place! Have we not oaths in heaven? Have we not witnesses on earth? Did not the trees listen, and the air receive our words, and the rocks repeat them?"

"Willingly—oh willingly would I go where thou goest, and stay where thou stayest! Willingly would I return to the days of my earlier youth, when the trees, and the rocks, and the flowers were to me even as living things! But it may not be—the dream is over; and although at times I sit in our old haunt beside the stream, and weave the wild chaplet for my hair, and weep for the years gone by, yet soon I smile—but not in happiness—through my tears, and cheerfully turn my steps towards the high destiny that calls me."

"High destiny!" cried the lover, starting back, and in a voice choked with pride and agony.—"Daughter of a beggar king! hope of a dying nation!"

"Ay, Witchaire," she replied, with a strange laugh, "we are poor—what then? we are honest; and it may be we are dying; but at least we shall die bravely! Still I am a King's daughter! Is not that much? Give me back, Witchaire—give me back to myself! Return me my vows—surrender me to Heaven, and pass on thy way in peace!"

"I do!" said Witchaire in a sepulchral tone. Matilde clasped both his hands in hers, and bending out of the window, looked up towards heaven. Her face was startlingly pale, her very lips betraying no more sign of human blood beneath, than if they had

been chiselled from the white marble; but in her eyes there burned a light so deep and intense as to make them at once beautiful and terrible to look upon. The next moment she turned down those eyes upon her lover, and a shower of quick bright tears descended upon his face; her frame was convulsed for an instant with passionate weeping, till, throwing her arms suddenly round his neck, she printed a kiss upon his lips, and vanished.

Witchaire, startled and bewildered, lost a moment in gazing, but then springing upon a projecting stone, darted his hand into the window to arrest the fugitive.

"Matilde! Matilde!" he cried; but on the instant a suit of black armour which hung upon the wall, struck by his hand, fell with a heavy clank upon the floor, assuming in the uncertain light the appearance of a human figure lying prone upon the earth. A thrill of superstitious fear passed across his heart, and when, on withdrawing his hand, which had encountered the edge of the sword, some drops of blood fell upon the cuirass, the bold warrior turning pale and faint, staggered back from the window.

It wanted scarcely an hour to sunrise when the Princess of Brittany tapped at the door of her father's private apartment. Receiving no answer, she knocked louder, and then, opening the door gently, went in. The King was sitting by the table, his face buried in his hands, and she thought he was asleep; but the next moment he spoke, although without changing his position.

"Art thou come?" said he; "is it sunrise so soon? Give me yet another hour to think, for the sake of old friendship!"

"My father!" said Matilde, gliding quickly to his side, and laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"Ha, is it thee? What mak'st thou out of bed at such an hour?"

"I could not rest, my father. Come, tell me the news; is it peace or war?"

"Peace and war, my child, are the affairs of men; be thou satisfied with performing worthily the duties of thine own sex and station.* Why art thou up so early?"

"Indeed I could not rest. Shall I tell thee what have been my thoughts—what waking dreams I have been weaving for fault of sleeping ones?"

"Go to—this is no time for dreaming; go—I am busy."

"In faith, but I will tell thee, and then, dear father, I will skip at thy bidding."

"Girl, thou art pale, thy cheek is like white marble; thy heart talks not of skipping."

"Hush, hush! thou shalt not jeer me into silence; for I *will* tell thee what have been the thoughts that have kept me from my rest. I thought of the hero Conan, whose fortunes thou didst speak of last night. I saw him gliding away from the wild but lovely shores of his own seagirt home, the waves dancing madly around him, and the piping winds screaming shrilly in his ear. He landed on the coast of Gaul, where redder waves and wilder shrieks were overflowing the earth and filling the air. He threw himself into the *melée*, cleared a resting-place with the sweep of his sword, and received his conquest in gift from the masters of the land. In vain the Visigoth, the Aquitanian, the Saxon, crowded around the charmed circle of valour and freedom:—they durst not enter! Then I thought of the unbroken line of eleven kings that followed—ay, unbroken even amidst the stormy masses of barbarian foes that dashed against the bark of our Little Britain—and my heart was proud of my country.* Then I bowed myself in shame and sorrow over the short disgrace we sustained; but I saw the spirit of Conan gliding amidst the wrecks of our freedom, and I lifted up my head and smiled. Then I saw thee—even thee, oh my father!—and thou sat'st upon a royal throne, with thy nobles round thee, arrayed, not in the scarlet mantles of slaves, but in the steel coats of warriors. And soon thou didst arise from the seat of the ancient kings of our country, and thy brow was beautiful but terrible in the old diadem it wore. With a fierce gesture of command, and a glance of fire, and a voice of thunder, thou didst issue forth the proclamation of liberty. 'We are free!'—these

were the words —‘we are free!’ And straightway the iron warriors around thee, and the dames and damsels of the court, and the people without, and the mother and her young child, and the bridegroom and his just-married wife, and the new-made orphan, and the widow in the midst of her first shower of tears—all answered with a shout that filled the air even to saturation—‘We are free! we are free!’—Hark! I hear it now!”

“My child, my child, thou dreamest!”

“Sir, it was no dream. There is not a stone of this house, not a clod of that plain, not a rock of yonder hills, not a tree, not a flower, not a weed upon the bosom of the land—there is not a heart that beats this day in Brittany which does not cry aloud, ‘We are free!’” Morvan clasped his daughter in his arms.

“Matilde,” he cried,—“Oh, my Matilde! wert thou a man-child of my house, perhaps my heart might be hardened; but with thee I am a father, and no king!”

“I am no man-child, my father,” replied Matilde, returning his caress, “but I am a Breton maid, who knows how to die for her country.”

“Thou die!—thou! Alas! these slender limbs, that pale, pale brow, that bloodless lip, these silken tresses! Alas, alas! I feel that it is not only as a king I represent my country, but as a father. How many old men have daughters too! How many mothers fondle this morning their young children! How many pale, fair girls—how many lisping babes look up to Morvan for mercy and protection!”

“My father,” said Matilde, “if the men of Brittany are represented in thy person, even so are the women in mine. Try me, O my father! and in me read the heart of the maidens of our people. Think’st thou we will accept of safety bought with the honour of our country? Thou art deceived—thou dost not know us. Awake! arouse thee! set us the example of valour and fortitude, as becomes thy sex and station. Lead on, and I will follow even to death. Be a man and a Breton, O King, and Matilde will be thy daughter!”

Morvan pressed his daughter again in his arms, and wearied with the conflict of his feelings, sat down.

"Come," said she in a tone of gaiety, as she seated herself playfully on his knee, "I will sing thee the song thou lovest, of the old warriors of Britain, and thou shalt drink one draught of wine to revive thy heart after thy night-watching. What, the wine-cup on the floor! In sooth, it is both sin and shame; and not thy wont, my father, if the revel shouts that sometimes reach my half-sleeping ear at night tell true tales." She filled up the cup, once—twice—and thrice, and sang the war songs he loved best between whiles; she returned at every pause to the conversation they had dropped, and painted in rainbow colours the half-repentent enterprise; she drew her father's sword—admired the blade—reminded him of the deeds that had rendered it famous, and mimicked the exercises of war. The old man's eyes began to sparkle—his oppressed breath came freely—the prospect that had appeared so clouded before, was now seen through the gleam of the wine-cup, or reflected in the glorious imagination of his daughter—and he strode with a warrior's step through the apartment.* The clarion pealed from the great tower. Matilde caught her father's hand and kissed it, dashed the wine-cup upon the floor, and exclaiming, "We are free!" rushed out of room.

The envoy, true to his appointment, entered the next moment, and with surprise as well as grief read an answer to his message in the King's eyes.

"Tell the Emperor," said Morvan abruptly, "that the King of the Bretons sends him greeting, but will send nothing else—not a coin of tribute! Go—thine errand is sped; fare thee well." Witchaire attempted to speak, but with a gesture of command the King motioned him to depart; and slowly and mournfully he left the room, and soon after the castle.

* Ermold. Nigell. The poet, however, makes the heroine the wife of Morvan, which, without controversy, is a great mistake. Nigellus also causes the lady to be guilty of strange indecorums in the way of seductive blandishments—and in the presence too of the Imperial envoy.

CHAPTER II.

IT was hot mid-day when some Frank horsemen, by dint of whip and spur, reached the spot where this narrative set out. The party consisted of nearly the same individuals, and was commanded, as then, by Witchaire, who on this occasion also bore the insignia of an imperial envoy. The leader descended from his steed as hastily as before, but with far less of the buoyant elasticity of youth, and looked back upon the country through which their path led. Ravaged fields were before him, where the dead bodies of the peasants fertilized the soil they had cultivated when living—ruined huts with smoke rising from the ruins—and burning towns, the flames of which ascended to the heavens, as if to arouse the slumbering vengeance of the Almighty. For thirty-nine days had the same game of glorious war been played—the same game of pillage, burning, violation, and massacre. The land was one wide field of desolation and death, and all things were subdued save the Breton spirit. Rising from the quenched ashes of the country some flames were still seen, which spoke of the warmth and life of freedom below. In vain the conqueror trampled them in one spot; hissing in blood, they but disappeared to rekindle in another. Morvan was still alive, and the wrecks of the national army were still held together by his name; but hunted into the toils, they had now no alternative but submission, or turning to bay, and thus dying the death of the brave and free.

“How lik’st thou it?” demanded Coslus, in a tone, half-surly, half-compassionate. “Here is a goodly prospect! By the faith of a soldier, I love not the war that is waged against thatched roofs, and babes and women!” Witchaire grew pale with passion, as he repressed by a loyal effort his inclination to reply.

“Thou art aware, Coslus,” said he, “that we bear an ensign of truce. In the name of all that is honourable and manly, let no opportunity, nay, let no provocation tempt thee to spill more of

this gallant blood when I am gone. I have crouched in the dust—I have licked the Emperor's feet like a spaniel for the commission I now carry ; and take care, if thou lovest or fearest me, that it be not sullied even with a maiden's tear. Encamp under these trees as silently as possible, and await my return." The young chief then leaped into the thicket, and pursued the same path on which we have followed him before, with light and hasty steps, but with a heavy and foreboding heart.

When at length he crossed the ford of the river, no sentinel challenged the stranger's step ; and with a beating heart, and a thousand presages of evil, he ascended the eminence which overlooked the plain.

A change, but not nearly to the extent he dreaded, appeared in the aspect of the place. The canals, indeed, were broken and choked, the bridges destroyed, the tents scattered in fragments upon the plain, and the very soil torn up, as if by the tread of men or horses. But the castle stood almost entire, and, though blackened with burning, and shattered in some of its outer bulwarks, appeared to be still capable of defence. Sentinels were posted, as before, upon the walls, and the usual precautions of war adopted in the immediate vicinity of the fortress, or at least within the circle of the fortifications ; but the wide area around, once glittering with arms, was deserted, and the little look-out towers upon the hills, formerly bristled with lances, and echoing to the clarion of the watchmen, were a heap of silent ruins.

It was some time before the visitor could gain admittance to the castle. Even after his quality had been recognised and his errand told, the defenders, either in scorn or despair, refused to open their gates to the messenger of peace. When at length he was allowed to enter, the warlike and orderly appearance of the place, after all it had suffered, struck Witchcaire with surprise and admiration. There was even an air of gaiety about the men, which he could only have conjectured to be unnatural from its excess. About twenty horses stood in the court-yard ready harnessed, with a groom at the head of each, employed in bandying jokes with his comrades, whilst attending to his charge. The sentries whistled

as they walked ; and while ascending the stairs, Witchaire's astonished ears were greeted with a peal of laughter from the banqueting-hall. When he entered, the court, although greatly diminished in numbers, was more splendid in point of costume than before ; tables were set out, covered with rich cloths, and a profusion of wine-cups of gold and silver, and the carpets, although the winter was now creeping in, were of flowers instead of straw or rushes.

"What, at feasting time again?" cried the King. "Thou art lucky, Witchaire. But what says my brother Louis now?"

"The Emperor," replied Witchaire, "has commanded me to——"

"Hold ! 'The most illustrious and *clement* Emperor.' That is the style—is it not? He whom men call Louis the Good-natured. I pray thee, on."

"Sir," said the envoy, "I am commanded by my prince to express to thee the regret with which he daily sees so many brave men perish ; and although the fault has lain in thy obstinacy, and not in his injustice, for the purpose of preventing a farther waste of blood, to offer thee in his name——"

"What?" demanded the King, as Witchaire hesitated, while the blood rushed to his face. A kind of hushing sound ran through the hall, and the most profound silence prevailed while the envoy replied——

"Forgiveness. Acknowledge the supremacy of the Emperor, do homage for thy crown, and pay the tribute that is due, and so the sword of extermination shall be stayed. Thy people may then return unharmed, even those now engaged in open warfare, to their fields and their homes, to their wives and their children." The same dead silence was preserved in the assembly during the King's reply, only interrupted, after Witchaire had concluded, by a strong drawing of the breath.

"Accept, noble Witchaire," said Morvan, "our poor thanks for this generous offer. The advantages, as thou hast enumerated them, that we should gain by peace are surely such as merit an impartial examination ; and I should ill discharge my duty as a

king did I not carefully weigh the answer to be returned. In the first place, 'the sword of extermination would be stayed'—why, that is well; nay, it is more than well, it is excellent. Yet, stop; let me consider. An inducement like this can only be offered to the living—the dead have no part in it! There was no thought of submission when my gallant subjects, who are now stiff in their graves, stood bolt upright in their armour; and, I swear, I think it would be rank injustice to accept of terms for ourselves which we refused for them! What say ye, my comrades? Would not the very ravens laugh hoarse scorn at us as they sailed away, gorged and slow from their banquet? Would not the bare skulls grin in our faces, when we stumbled upon them on the hills, were it a hundred years hence? What answer, I demand of ye, would our butchered brethren return, if the question were put to *them*?"

"No! no! no!" broke from the assembly, in a succession of deep and hollow groans.

"No! Is it even so?" said the King; "then the matter is settled, for by heaven, they are the majority! But hold: if we accept of the mercy of the Emperor, saith the enemy, we 'may return to our fields and our homes, and our wives and our children;' here is another point. Truly, these are temptations which it would take a heart of iron to resist. The very words fall upon the ear like the babbling of brooks, the rustling of the rich and yellow corn, the singing of mothers to their young children, and the sweet kisses of paternal affection. But our fields—ay, there it is, Sir! Why, they are stripped as bare as the blade of this sword; the ploughshare of war has entered into their bosom, and the crop is desolation and death. Such fields, indeed, may be worth dying for, but surely they have nothing to do with a question of life. Then our homes—we have no homes! Wouldst thou have us go to the place of the habitations of our fathers, and sit down in a heap of black ashes! Why, the nations would laugh at us. And our wives and children?—oh! our children! Our sons are slaughtered, and our wives and daughters dishonoured! 'Sdeath, Sir, hast thou come to banter us? Is it to us thou talkest of life, of fields, and homes, and families? Dost thou beard us in

our very den, where we are rising up like the hunted tiger in his last wrath and last agony, to throw ourselves upon the hell-hounds who have destroyed us, to worry and to be worried, to hew and to be hewn in pieces——”

“To revenge, and then to die !” cried a deep stern voice amidst the assembly.

“Revenge and death !” answered the whole, in a single thunder shout, in which was heard the shrill cries of the women rising in wild, almost unearthly yells, above the hoarser voices of the men. The masquerade was at an end. The strange smiles in which their faces were dressed disappeared, disclosing in the ghastly features beneath an expression of despair only illumined by the baleful glare of revenge. The order and ceremony of a court were broken up. Those who were sitting at the tables rose tumultuously, dashing the wine-cups upon the floor, and all, both men and women, crowded round the envoy, on whom glances hungry of vengeance were darted from eyes which but a month before could only have furnished the arrows of love.

“Depart, Sir Envoy,” cried Morvan. “Depart while thou art well. Trust me, there is thunder in these gloomy brows around thee.”

“He shall not depart !” cried the shrill voice of one of that sex which is ever forward whether in good or evil ; and at the word the swords of the men leaped from their scabbards. The King folded his arms, and looked calmly on, apparently indifferent as to the result ; and the fate of Witchaire would in all probability have been decided the next moment but for the interference of the Princess Matilde.

“Back, my friends, back !” said she, flinging aside the thirsty steel with her uncovered hands, as she approached the victim. Witchaire himself was one of the first to obey the command, and he shrunk back aghast as if at the appearance of a spectre. Every vestige of blood had disappeared from her face, and her form and features were so strangely wasted that the spectators had some difficulty in believing that they were indeed animated by a human soul. Her voice was hollow and broken, and her motions feeble ;

but in her eyes the retreating energies of life had concentrated their forces. She turned upon Witchaire for an instant the unnatural yet steady brightness of these long worshipped stars, which now exhibited neither anxiety for his preservation nor even consciousness of his identity, and then addressed her countrymen.

"My friends and brothers," said she, "this man is an envoy, who has trusted himself here on the faith of our honour. That honour, as yet, has been unsullied. It is because of honour that we are—what we now are. This is the great, the glorious distinction between us and our cause, and the Franks and theirs. This has enabled us to lose without being defeated, and to die without being conquered; and for this, a thousand years hence, the people of other nations will listen with a flush and a tear to the fate of Brittany. Let us not, in the closing scene, throw away so noble an advantage; let us not wrong the gallant spirits we are about to follow, by sullyng the cause in which they fell. Go, Sir Envoy, depart in peace, and tell thy Emperor, from the last of the Breton Kings, that since we cannot live free, we will die free." Witchaire stood silent and motionless, gazing at the spectre for some time after she had concluded, till at length signs of a renewal of the tumult began to manifest themselves in the assembly. A voice was heard, exclaiming from a corner of the apartment, where a lady had sat alone from the beginning, apparently in a kind of stupor—

"Freedom! Who talks of freedom? What care I for freedom? Give me back my husband—my daughter—my son—my only son—my fair-haired boy—my hope—my beautiful——!" And as her voice rose into a wild scream, it was echoed by some of the other females; and one of them, in a sudden frenzy, drew a dagger from her girdle, and rushed towards the envoy. Matilde took Witchaire's hand and led him out of the room, while the shrieks of the frantic woman, who was held back by the chiefs, rang through the castle.

They descended the stairs in silence, leading to the great door, and Witchaire felt as if the touch of that thin, pale, cold hand was pressed even to suffocation upon his heart. A strong breath of air,

from a doorway which opened upon the high terrace, seemed at length to recall his flying senses, and he remembered with a start that only half his mission had been performed—that having failed in saving the father, he had now to care for the preservation of the daughter.

He paused at the entrance of the doorway, and undoing the feeble clasp of her hand, threw his arm gently round her waist, and without meeting with any perceptible resistance, drew her out upon the terrace. They thus walked slowly together towards the angle of the castle, where they had last parted, and where in happier years they had often stood watching the sun sinking behind those western hills, so dear to their youthful imaginations. Trembling with emotion, he pointed to the summits of those high places of love and memory, and then turned his eyes upon her who had so long been the presiding priestess.

“Matilde,” he whispered—“Oh, my Matilde! look at that golden sky we have so often looked on together. Dost thou not remember the hills of our youth? How balmy is the light wind that fans thy cheek! how cool and pleasant this beautiful evening! Oh, shut not thy soul against the blessed influences of the hour, which are the messengers of God, for the dew of heaven and the breath of the fragrant earth have a power from on high to heal wherever they fall, and restore its freshness and perfume even to the withered heart. Look where the light just touches the tops of those trees on the hill-side, and leaves a broad spot of shadow below; that was the place where the first vow of love broke from my lips. See the path winding along the edge of the glen, its ends lost in the shade beneath and the sunlight above! There were we wont to wander, dreaming—thou canst not have forgotten; such dreams as Heaven sends to teach man that he is immortal!” Matilde turned her face towards her lover, and it was illumined with a smile so radiant that he imagined, while he gazed, that he had indeed succeeded in banishing her despair. But the next moment, in a voice clear, yet touchingly mournful, she exclaimed—

“Dreams! dreams! dreams! It was all a dream! It was a vision of last night, that can never more be recalled!”

"Oh, say not so!" cried Witchaire; "and yet, in part, thou art right: never more can it return in all the freshness and brightness of those early years, when earth itself was more of heaven than ever churchman dreamed. Dim, as seen through tears, it will now rise upon our spirits—but rise it will. Morvan shall not die; he shall be captured alive: to this I pledge myself; and, although no more a king, he will be a father still. From my castle windows we may at least look upon the lovely land he has lost; time will heal, if it cannot restore; and we may all be yet as happy as in a chequered world like this we could hope to be, after the golden dreams of youth have fled from our eyes."

"Captured alive!" said the Breton maiden, with a start and a gasp. "Witchaire, if I thought that my father went not forth to the battle to die, I would with my own hand—yea, with the hand which has climbed his knees, and clasped his neck, and played with his grey hairs, and drawn down his face to mine that he might kiss me—with that hand I would plunge a dagger into his heart! Captured alive! a lord of smoking ruins! a king of the dead! Why, thou might'st as well talk to me of life—to me, who kindled the funeral pile of my country, and drove forth my father to a bloody grave!"

"Hush, hush! thy spirit wanders, my Matilde."

"It will soon be at rest. What I have done, I have done in honour, and it is followed by no shame and no repentance. Were it to do again, I swear by the great Being whom Christian and heathen alike adore, by the Saints and Martyrs of the true Church and by the ancient Gods of my people, I would again lose in the glorious game my country, my father, and my life!" Matilde walked proudly away a few paces; but stopping suddenly, looked again towards the hills.

"Ay, look!" cried Witchaire eagerly, "for there is fever in thy heart, and frenzy in thy brain; look, till the softness and mildness of the scene steal upon thy senses—till the mercy of God descends in the dews of eve upon thy soul!"

"I will look, O my friend," replied Matilde, "for to look now will be no treason to my country or my king. I look for the last

time ; and I look across a river of blood and tears, whose accumulating waves have long since swept away all traces of a ford. Farewell, ye golden skies ! farewell, ye hills, beautiful and beloved ! Farewell, ye haunts of my youth, peopled with glorious imaginations ! No more on me will fall the hues of sunset, or the shades of evening ; no more the sweet coolness of the twilight air ; no more the vesper song of birds, or the hinted whispers of far rivers, mocking the ear that strives to catch them, amidst the myriads of small sounds with which the woodland air undulates when it is most silent. Farewell, ye shady seats, and ye rich and hanging boughs—turf altars of the heart, and Druid groves of love, I shall never see ye more. Farewell—farewell !” Her voice trembled, her words came faint and lingering, as if each dreaded to be the last ; she waved her head mournfully, and while retreating slowly backwards, tears rolled bright and fast down her cheeks.

“Not yet,” gasped Witchaire, his armour rattling with his agitation ; “not yet farewell—I would—I would—I would—” but his voice was choked, the pride of manhood gave way, and the bold warrior, covering his eyes with his hands, wept like a child. Matilde sprang back at one bound to his side ; she threw her arms round his neck, and shaken by passionate weeping, buried her face in his bosom.

“It was to thee,” she sobbed—“it was to thee, my friend and my love, that I bade farewell ! Thou wert the god of my heart’s idolatry, and these—the woods, the hills, the trees, and the rivers, were but as attributes of thy divinity ; without thee they would have been but rocks and water, and plants of the earth ; thou wert the soul that animated their lifeless forms ; in them I saw only thee, and in their voice I heard only thine ; thou wert the spirit of the world, whom, in the superstition of youthful love, I worshipped even in stocks and stones !” The words had scarcely departed from her lips when a loud blast of the clarion pierced the air ; and starting like some affrighted ghost at crowing of the cock, Matilde unclasped her hands from her lover’s neck, and darted up the terrace. When she had gained the doorway, already black with the shades of evening, she lingered for a moment ; and her pale

bright face was seen by her lover through his tears, gleaming like a star in a dark sky; the next instant it vanished, and Witchaire felt that he could weep no more.

In a little while, the sound of voices and footsteps descending the stairs, and a more distant hum from the court-yard startled him from the trance-like reverie into which he had fallen; and, guessing that the devoted King was about to issue for the last time from the castle of his fathers, he determined to ascertain in what manner he had provided, or wished to provide, for the safety of her who would, in all probability, be so soon an orphan.

On reaching the court-yard, he found the cavaliers already seated on their horses, and the servants standing round with lighted torches, which threw a red glare upon the scene, so strong as to reveal, with the clearness of day, its minutest details. Morvan himself carried the national banner, torn almost to rags and clotted with blood, while each of his followers bore an ensign or other peculiar badge of his own family. They were all clothed in iron, from the crown of the head to the armed heel, and were equipped with all the appliances of war customary in the time, except the sheaths of their swords.

The great gate was thrown open, and a simultaneous clattering of hoofs upon the paved court, attended by the waving of plumes and glancing of armour, announced that the little party was in motion. When Morvan, however, had gained the arched portal, which was the threshold of his dwelling, he commanded a halt, and, agreeably to the custom of the time, called for the wine-cup.* A large golden vase filled with wine was presented to the King by one of the few ladies whose nerves were firm enough to enable them to be present at this final leave-taking. Before raising it to his lips, Morvan threw a rapid glance round the place, and his eye dwelt for an instant on the higher windows of the castle, where his heart told him Matilde stood, praying and trembling, and gazing

* Ermold. Nigell. We find the custom of the "stirrup-cup" among several other barbarous nations; and to this day it is maintained in some parts of Scotland.

at her father through her tears. The next moment, however, he drank, in a cheering tone, the healths of his followers.

"Come, my friends," said he, "now for the last stake of Brittany! We play for all that remains to us of country, home, and family. If we see again those old black walls, we shall see them as conquerors; and after having washed away our wrongs in the blood of our enemies, we shall drown their memory, as far as may be, in the red juice of the grape. If we fall, we fall like men and warriors; we fall as our kinsmen fell; and even in death we shall possess our country, for Brittany will then be only one wide grave of the brave and the free. Health, friends and brothers!—health, fair and noble ladies! Health, my faithful serfs and liegemen!—health and farewell!" Morvan then passed the vase to his nearest follower, who, after drinking, handed it to the next, and thus it made the round of the whole party. When all had drunk, the word of command was again given by the chief; the horses struck their heels simultaneously into the pavement, plumes nodded and banners waved, and the armour of each warrior successively flashed in the red light and disappeared, as he pressed forward into the darkness without.

Witchaire gazed with admiring pity at each noble and stately figure, as it plunged from the light into a gloom typical to his imagination of the grave whither they were hastening. But when the last of the cortege spurred across the court, hardly in time to overtake his comrades—a mere stripling, bending under the weight of his armour, and who seemed to have been detained in the despairing embrace of his mother—the stout soldier turned sickening away, and cursed with a bitter heart the demon of war.

He himself, in the meantime, was forgotten or unregarded by the servants and others remaining behind; and after the gates were closed, he was allowed to wander as he chose through the court, without interruption.
 and sta. space he devoted to meditation on the course he was now tilde uncla There had been no time and no opportunity to ques- terrace. Wi. as to the manner in which he wished his daughter to the shades of r; and he thus felt that he was himself the guardian

of the Princess. The wreck of the Breton army was hemmed in by the imperial legions, at a place on the outskirts of the natural defences which we have described as surrounding the fortress of Morvan ; and the King, with his personal followers, was no doubt on his way to join them there.* A general and decisive engagement could not be avoided, even if that was desired, many hours beyond sunrise ; and the few who might escape from the slaughter would fall back through the woods and morasses, fighting every inch of the way, till, throwing themselves into the fortress, the whole would perish together.

That this was the plan for to-morrow, that fatal fortieth day since the massacres began, could not be doubted ; for there was not a single chief left behind in the castle to attend to its defence. Matilde, therefore, Witchaire concluded, must be removed, and that instantly, even if force were requisite to drag her from the fatal spot.

He desired one of the servants, who happened to pass, to solicit for him an interview with the Princess. But after waiting a considerable time, the messenger had not returned. He then wandered himself in quest of her, and explored by turns, without effect, the banqueting-hall, the ante-rooms, and the terrace. The few persons he met in his progress either replied negligently to his questions, or not at all, flitting about the chambers and the stairs, as silent as ghosts.

The time was speeding—the hour of daylight was already not far off ; and Witchaire, in an agony of impatience, hastened to the part of the building which contained the sleeping apartments, concluding that Matilde had retired for the night. Some of the doors at which he knocked were opened to him by the tenants in full court-dress, and shut again in his face as soon the question had passed his lips ; at others, which were not opened, the moaning voices he heard within bore no resemblance to that of the Princess. Her apartment, however, was at length pointed out to him by one lady, with a scornful and malicious smile ; and as the door

was shut violently against him, he heard the informant break into shrieks of hysterical laughter. He knocked gently at the door indicated, but all was silent; he then applied his ear to the crevice, but without being able to catch a single sigh. His heart swelling with pity, he stood for some time irresolute; but at length, on knocking louder, he imagined that he heard some sound within.

"Matilde," he whispered, "it is I, thy friend, thy father's friend—speak to me, for God's sake! I have but one word to say!" The sound, if it had been a reality at all, was not repeated; everything was still, silent even as death. Witchaire retreated in perplexity from the door, and, standing on tiptoe, looked out for an instant from a small window that dimly lighted the corridor.

There was not a breath of air; the sky on one side was covered with heavy and indefinite clouds, and on the other the moon shone with that faint lustre sometimes observed in her disc after the sun has risen. No view of the east, however, could be obtained from the passage; and Witchaire, half dreading that day break had really arrived, returned hastily to the Princess's door, and, knocking loudly, besought her to speak with him.

Still no answer. He became alarmed. A thousand strange apprehensions swept across his mind; and suddenly discharging a furious storm of blows upon the door, he called out the name of Matilde in a loud and commanding voice. While listening for the result, the same wild hysterical laugh he had heard before from the opposite apartment, broke in boding screams upon his ear, and unable longer to control the impatience of his dread, he threw himself with fury against the door, and burst into the room. It was empty! Witchaire, relieved and yet bewildered, stood for a few seconds in the middle of the floor, hardly capable of exerting the faculty of thought, till at length returning to himself with a start—

"I have one chance more," he cried; "Morvan shall be surrounded and taken alive by my own band; I will obtain from the Emperor the command of the troops sent against this fortress; and, deprived of their chief, the ruins of the Breton army will no

longer hold out. Here, in the meantime, wherever she has been concealed, Matilde is in safety." He flew along the corridor, descended the stairs, and seeking out the stables, accoutred a horse with his own hands. He then drew his sword, and commanded the servants to throw open the gates. The men obeyed, not from fear, but from habit, and spurring his steed fiercely, he galloped out into the night.

It was not quite daybreak—or rather, it was not altogether night; but that appearance, scarcely to be termed luminous, in the eastern sky, which is the first faint edge of the dawn, struck a mortal terror into the soul of Witchaire. Onward he swept across the deserted plain, strewn with broken armour, torn banners, and ruined tents, and right up the steep eminence that commanded it, without drawing bridle for a moment's breathing-time. He swam the river—dashed through the marshy track, sometimes saddle-deep in mud and water, and sometimes feeling the earth shake and give way beneath the heels of his gallant steed; till at length he gained the edge of the forest, at the farther side of which his band was encamped.

Here whip and spur were useless. The horse plunged forward with instinctive eagerness, but the intervention of the trees continually impeded his course. Witchaire more than once threw himself from the back of the noble animal, imagining that he should be able to make greater progress on foot; but this he speedily found to be a miscalculation; for, by a few vigorous bounds over the clear spaces which frequently occurred, his dumb companion made more than amends for the comparative slowness with which he threaded his way through the trees.

The dawn, in the mean time, had really appeared; soon the sun rose above the horizon, and by and by showers of golden light streamed through the foliage beneath which our traveller journeyed. The voice of the forest was up. The birds awoke singing; the morning breeze ran whispering through the trees; and the whole air was filled with the multitudinous sounds of day. Witchaire cursed the light of the sun, and the music of morning. The sudden glittering of the leaves, as a straggling beam kissed the

dew that covered them, startled his heart like the glancing of armour; and even the buzz of the early bee, as it swung past his ear, struck upon his alarmed senses like the trump of battle. He felt that he was too late. At this very moment, perhaps, at the farther end of the forest, the butchery was beginning; and before he should be able to join his troops—far less to lead them round to the scene of action, the fate of Morvan would be decided. He might reach the fortress, indeed, before its capture; but he would reach it when it had become the final rallying point of despair—when the gaunt wolf of Brittany had for the last time turned to bay, not with the hope of escape, but with the determination to die. What was not to be dreaded from a determination so deep, a despair so overwhelming? The immolation of females by their clans and kinsmen was not unknown in that bloody time; and as the thought rose like a spectre upon his imagination, the ear of the self-torturer was filled with shrieks.

Whether born of these ideal sounds, and bodiless like them, or not, the tumult was continued in his ear even after the dream with which it had been associated had vanished. He dared not pause in his career to listen; and it was in vain to curse the whispering of the leaves, the singing of the birds, and even the crashing noise of the branches as he burst through them; but when suddenly a sound which he could not mistake—the war notes of his own clarion—came faintly upon his ear, he was convinced that some bloody scene awaited him.

This conviction was so far of use, inasmuch as it served to recall his mind from the frightful imaginations that had tormented him; and collecting his energies with the habitual promptitude of a soldier, he pressed forward with a speed more sure because less disturbed.

His course was at present directed, not in a straight line towards the encampment, but across a portion of the forest by which he should arrive earlier at the open country; and he calculated, that although in this way a considerable hill would intervene between him and the point of his destination, after emerging from the wood, he should still be a considerable gainer in point of time, owing to

the absence of trees. He at length completely cleared the forest, and his wearied steed, as if rejoicing at the deliverance, bounded with renewed eagerness up the brow of the hill.

The clarion sounded again, and more distinctly, and Witchaire sword flew from its scabbard as he recognized in the notes a message to his own ear—a summons to the absent chief in time of need and peril. The sounds of battle then came one by one upon his ear; the harsh scream of the horses, and the wild war-cries of the men—the shout of command—the yell of pain or fury—the clash of swords and the ringing of armour—and ever and anon between the piercing blast of the clarion, imploring aid for the weaker party.

Chafing with the same instinctive rage which animates a tiger in the near presence of a foe whom as yet he cannot see, the trained warrior pressed up the hill, and at length gained the summit. His little party was indeed engaged in a most perilous encounter with a force greatly superior in point of number, and no whit inferior in soldierlike appearance. The enemy he could tell even at this distance to be Bretons, by their peculiar mode of fighting, which consisted in whirling round after striking with the javeline, and returning again and again in the same manner to the attack.*

Had the odds been differently balanced, Witchaire would probably have chosen to make his appearance first in the peaceful character of an envoy; although even then hopeless of soothing the desperation of the self-devoted martyrs of freedom: but at present, the danger of his comrades, the uncompromising firmness of their opponents, his own responsibility as chief, every sentiment of prudence, loyalty, and honour, combining with his warlike habits, steeled his heart against compassion. His appearance, as he galloped at full speed down the breast of the hill, was hailed by a burst of joy from his companions in arms, who were by this time palpably giving way before the fierce desperation of the Bretons; and Witchaire only replied by shaking his sword above his head,

* *Ermold. Nigell.*

and shouting his war-cry in a voice of thunder, as he sprang like a tiger into the *melée*.

The assault of even a single fresh, vigorous, and accomplished soldier, when the combatants were already worn out with fighting, was sufficient to turn the fate of the battle; and the Franks rallying round their young leader, made a more desperate and bloody charge upon the Bretons, than they had themselves that day sustained.

Covered from head to foot in their dark armour, Witchaire up to this moment had been able, in the hurry of the battle, only to recognise his opponents in their generic character of foes: what then was his dismay on seeing himself singled out for assault by an individual whom in the instant he knew, by the torn and bloody banner he carried, to be the father of Matilde!

Springing aside, he eluded the shock of the furious veteran, who found in Coslus, Witchaire's lieutenant, who chanced to be at some distance behind, a match nearly as worthy in all the uses of war. Coslus was almost borne from his horse by this unexpected, and indeed, as regarded him, unintentional attack; but with a sudden back stroke of his sword, as his enemy rushed past him in the career, he cut asunder the fastenings of Morvan's helmet, which, falling off, left the grey head of the grim old warrior exposed. Coslus then spurred up to the King with the intention of closing, and Morvan, perceiving the *manœuvre*, suddenly dropped his lance, and drew his sword, and an encounter took place, in which the blows of steel upon steel resounded over the field like the clanking of a hundred hammers upon the anvil.

At this moment a thought darted like lightning through Witchaire's brain—

"I will bear him to the earth," he cried, "with my spear. I know that old cuirass too well to fear wounding him. He will be stunned with the fall—his followers will fly in despair, and I shall take him alive, in spite of all the fiends that have set us on to this hellish war!" He couched his lance, spurred his steed, and seemed to fly rather than ride over the field. His destination was instantly observed by some of the Bretons.

"For the King!" cried one, throwing himself in his way, although with not the remotest possibility of success,—for the superior impetus of Witchaire bore both man and horse to the earth, and he bounded on, hardly having felt the interruption.

"For Morvan!" shouted another of the self-devoted, as he met the Frank in his fierce career; but his spear shivered against the tried cuirass, and he fell backward from his horse.

A third interruption took place just as Witchaire reached the scene of the combat, with lance pointed against the thickest part of Morvan's armour. A cavalier, without any battle-cry to announce his coming or his purpose, and with neither spear in rest nor sword in hand, suddenly threw himself between, and received the blow. Witchaire withdrew the weapon shuddering, for, owing either to the badness of the armour, or the unskilfulness of the adjustment, it had pierced into the victim's breast—into the breast of that poor slender boy he had seen with so much pity following the warlike cortège from the castle. Weak, however, as had been the opposition, it was effectual in baffling Witchaire's purpose; for, before he could couch his lance again, he saw the grey head of Morvan cleft down to the shoulder by his fierce and skilful enemy, and the Breton King fell upon the earth a dead man.

At this fatal sight his followers fled in all directions, pursued by the Franks; and in another moment Witchaire found himself alone, leaning upon his lance, and gazing alternately upon the dying boy and the dead King. He dismounted from his horse, and would have approached him to whom some assistance, or at least relief, might yet be rendered; but suddenly his limbs refused to perform their office—his feet seemed to grow to the earth, and a deadly sickness came over his heart. A thin, long ringlet of the darkest gold had escaped the unpractised hands which fixed the helmet, and hung down the youth's back! Witchaire at length flung himself upon his knees; with trembling hands, that defeated their own haste, undid the helmet, and, with a cry of horror and despair, discovered the features of Matilde.

The Princess, revived by the air, or her fitting spirit recalled by the voice she had loved so well, opened her eyes.

"Witchaire," she said faintly, "where is my father?" Witchaire covered his face with his hands.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Matilde, "I would not have my father be the living King of a dead people. Where is he?" she continued—"Did he die near me? Wilt thou lift me up, O my my friend and my love! and lay me beside my father, that my eyes may see him ere they grow dark for ever?" Witchaire tenderly moved her to where the dead body of Morvan lay, scarcely two paces distant. She looked without shrinking at the ghastly wound by which his life-blood had flowed, and kissed his lips and his grey hairs; then leaning her head exhausted upon her father's breast, she drew his hand round her waist, and extending one of her own to Witchaire—

"Come," said she, "sit thou down also beside me, and, in the arms of her father and her lover, Matilde will die happy."

"I dare not—oh, I dare not!" cried Witchaire, with a burst of grief and horror—"for I am thy murderer, Matilde!" A radiant smile lighted up her face as she replied, when he had knelt down beside her—

"If thou knew'st how sweet it is to die by the hand of one we love! Nearer—nearer. Witchaire, dost thou remember that at my earnest prayer thou didst unbind the vows of my virgin heart, and give me back even to myself? That gift, all worthless as it is, I would return to thee again. No honour—no country—no dream of freedom and renown can ever more impel me to retract; for I am thine, Witchaire—thine, my true, my tried—thine, my first, last love—in—in—death!" She had drawn down his face to hers, and as the last word trembled upon her breath, her soul escaped upon his lips.

The death of Morvan was the signal for submission throughout the whole of Brittany; and after having laid waste the country with fire and sword for forty days, Louis le Debonnaire had the good nature to stay his* hand when no more were to be found to resist.

* *Ermold. Nigell.* En poi de tems, et à poi de travail destruit tout le pays, ne vout ainques cesser jusques à tant que Marmanons leur rois fut occis. *Chroniques de Saint Denis.* See also the *Annales Eginhardi, de gest. Lud. Pii.*

King Morvan and his daughter were buried in one grave, on the spot where they fell ; and Witchaire also was supposed to have died in this bloody skirmish. His lands reverted to the Emperor, and in the course of time his very name was almost forgotten till recalled to the recollection of a few old persons by the following circumstance.

A wretched being, who had resided alone in a hovel in the neighbouring forest, as far back as the memory of the living extended, was one day found in a dying state, lying upon the grave of the Breton King, which was now distinguished by nothing more than a grassy mound of earth. At first he either could not or would not reply to any of the questions he was asked ; but when at length the passers-by endeavoured to remove him by force from the place, that they might procure him assistance or spiritual comfort in the nearest monastery, he opened his lips. "Leave me alone," were his words—"for I am Witchaire!" and he immediately expired. The grave was opened, and the remains of the hermit deposited therein, to moulder with the bones of her whom he loved, and slew.



The Adventures of Eriland.



Thorough brake, thorough brier,
Thorough muck, thorough mire,
Thorough water, thorough fire.

DRAYTON.

CHAPTER I.

Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.

DONNE.

IN the year of grace eight hundred and eighty-seven, on certain island in the Seine, there stood a city surrounded by a wall flanked with towers. In the midst of its narrow streets and blackened walls arose some loftier buildings, which conferred on it an air of grandeur when viewed at a distance; but on nearer inspection it presented to the eye only a confused mass of houses, generally mean and discoloured, and built of earth, strengthened by beams of timber. By means of a wooden bridge thrown over either arm of the river, the city communicated on one side with an extensive faubourg; and on the other, through some rows of houses, with the open country. The bridges were defended by wooden towers, and so secure was the city deemed, in its natural situation and artificial bulwarks, that it was considered by the engineers of the time to be almost impregnable. This city was Paris; or rather, this was the nucleus around which was to be gathered, in after ages, the glories of half the world.*

It was night; the autumnal leaves were whirling in eddies from the trees, and the wind swept moaningly along the black and swollen bosom of the Seine. Not a star was visible above, where only huge masses of vapour, formless and indefinite, floated across the sky, like heralds sent to announce the approach of winter in cloud and tempest. Night had crept gradually and sullenly over

* Some authors contend that Paris had no walls till after the Norman sieges: an opinion which appears to be without any foundation. So numerous a horde of invaders provided with boats, and to whom the water was as natural as the land, would hardly have been kept two years at bay solely by the arrows and lances of the besieged.

the city. The fires, as usual, had been extinguished at seven o'clock, for even in war the Count Odon* enforced the salutary regulations of peace; and all was darkness, except when, here and there, was seen some solitary citizen traversing the narrow streets, bearing a lantern in one hand to light his steps, and grasping his sword with the other to defend his purse or his life.

Suddenly, however, a blast of the horn was heard echoing from station to station on the walls, and at the signal a hundred fires blazed up from their summit. A strong glare was thus thrown upon the turbulent waters below, and discovered, just beyond arrow-shot, a numerous fleet of barges, moored to the banks and to each other so confusedly that the passage of the river was completely stopped. On the mainland the light was reflected from what resembled a city of tents and huts, constructed with an irregularity that seemed the effect of chance or madness; and moving figures were observed on the shore, passing and repassing by turns, and then plunging into the darkness beyond.

On the north bridge, and on the tower which defended it, esteemed the most important point of attack or defence in the fortifications, these alarm-fires were more numerous than elsewhere, and threw a strong light over a wide area around. There the extensive faubourg was seen in ruins; its enclosures were rent in pieces, its monuments overturned, and its streets choked up with rubbish; while amidst its lofty buildings was stuck here and there a wretched hovel, like the mud nest which a swallow builds in the courts of princes.

Presently, as if answering to the signal fires, a number of lights appeared on the mainland, and principally among the tents, which were thus shown to cover a surface of ground more than equal to that of the whole city; and near the banks of the river groups of men and women were seen collected round some larger blaze, among whom individual figures flitted with strange, wild gestures, like spectres in a dream.

The sentries, pacing from tower to tower on the city walls,

were ever and anon visited by some officer of rank armed to the teeth, who anxiously scanned the appearance of the river below, and directed a glance of keen scrutiny to the huts beyond. Within the walls, the soldiers destined to relieve guard were seen sleeping in groups by the light of a solitary torch that burned in the black-looking courts appointed for the purpose; and as the flame flickered in the wind, it disclosed, in their ghastly faces and torn and neglected dress, all the usual tokens of protracted strife.

At the foot of the walls were huddled, in wild confusion, huts, tents, and hovels of every imaginable form and material, apparently thrown together in a moment of hurry and dismay; and from thence arose that strange and indescribable sound which tells, even in the silence of night, of the proximity of a dense mass of human beings. Sometimes as one of the alarm-fires, caught by a stronger gust, flared and flashed over the ramparts, its light fell upon the shapeless roofs below, and exhibited, mingling with coverings of straw and mud, rich banners and embroideries converted into a shelter from the weather; and at such moments a glimpse might have been caught, through the numerous crevices, of figures, both male and female, whose dress and bearing proclaimed them to be the customary denizens of courts, separated by only a thin and ragged partition from the very basest of the peasantry. All things, in short, declared the immediate presence of war, and the danger, either fancied or real, which hovered round the beleaguered city.

For nearly two years had Paris presented the same spectacle, only varied occasionally by the chances of war—the attack, the repulse, the rally, and the arrival or loss of supplies. On the 20th of November, 885, clouds of dust and confused shouts in the distance had announced to the inhabitants the confirmation of their fears in the approach of the same formidable enemy who, little more than forty years before, had burned the faubourgs about their ears.* On that occasion, the weak and cowardly Charles, surnamed the Bald, instead of opposing force to force, bought the

* Mezeray, *Hist.* t. 3, p. 345.

retreat of the invaders by a bribe of seven thousand pounds weight of silver;* and when Paris had risen from its ashes, the citizens very naturally looked for a renewal of the visit which had been productive of so rich a harvest.

Nor were their expectations disappointed. The northern pirates, who were accustomed to alight periodically upon the shores of Neustria, like a cloud of locusts, only waited till the booty was worth their pillage, and then sailing up the Seine, began their ravages anew. Rouen had already fallen, and the hourly arrival of fugitives gave notice of the approach of the enemy. At length, like the rush of some headlong tide, they were discovered sweeping up the course of the river, and along its banks; and as they approached within nearer view, the French gazed with renewed wonder and terror upon barbarians still ruder than themselves. The pirates disembarked upon the right bank, at a place called Lupara,† from the wolf-dogs of the King being kept there, and their formidable battalions extended to the valley of Misere.‡

While viewing the strangers, however, with instinctive dread, fostered by the agency of a mistaken piety, which had taught the people to include in the church service a prayer for delivery “from the fury of the Normans,” the citizens were well aware that their position was greatly improved since the last fatal visit. At that time the ruinous contentions between the members of the royal family, which ended in the partition of the empire, might have paralyzed the efforts of Charles le Chauve, even had he not chanced to be at once a coward and a fool; and after the short reign of Louis le Begue, or the Stammerer, which succeeded, the kingdom was split into pieces, of which Louis and his brother Carloman had the larger portions. Now, however, that these two

* The monastery of St. Denis redeemed its abbot from captivity at the expense of six hundred and eighty-five pounds of gold: which affords us some data for calculating the relative value of a monk and a capital in the ninth century.

† Now the Louvre. *Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscript.* t. 17, p. 690—1.

‡ Now the Quai de la Megisserie: *Paris, Ancien, Moderne, &c.* t. 1. p. 69.

young princes had been removed providentially from a scene for which they were unfit, the dismembered empire was almost reunited in the person of a prince whose corporal bulk, it was hoped, typified the greatness of his soul, for Charles the Fat sat upon the throne of Charlemagne. But in addition to the good fortune of existing under an imperial régime, the city possessed the advantage of being governed by one of the bravest, highest spirits of the time. Odon, Count of Paris, on the approach of the Normans, unfurled the standard of St. Martin upon the walls,* and called upon the nation to defend its honour; he prepared the fortifications for defence, despatched couriers to warn the Emperor, who had not yet quitted his German dominions, and shut himself up in the city with the flower of the French nobility.

The northern bridge, connecting the city and its faubourg, was defended by a wooden tower raised on solid masonry, and against this, the most accessible point of attack, the whole force of the Normans was applied.† With such spirit, however, was the defence commenced, that the besiegers were driven back with great loss by a sally of the garrison; and the next morning they beheld, with a kind of superstitious terror, an addition of two stories which had been made to the tower during the night. It is recorded that the wild North-men were so much alarmed by this phenomenon, that had it not been for the reproaches of their wives, they would instantly have fled from a city defended to all appearance by magic. Shamed, however, if not encouraged, by female eloquence, they returned to the attack, and were received with showers of boiling oil and burning bitumen. Their fury, baffled in this quarter, was then directed against the faubourg, which they laid waste with fire and sword, as far as the celebrated monastery of St. Germain.

Finding that the riches of Paris were not by any means to be

* It was not till the beginning of the twelfth century, under Louis le Gros, that the oriflamme of St. Denis became the national standard of France.

† This tower was afterwards called the Tour du Grand Chatelet, and the Pont aux Changes now bestrides the river instead of the wooden bridge, whose fate is recorded in the text.

obtained at a single swoop, Sigefroy, the general in chief of the Normans, with cool determination set himself to fortify his camp, and construct such engines of offence as were known at the time. Among them, we are told of battering rams that shook the walls, moveable sheds behind which six men could fight at a time, and wheeled castles garrisoned by sixty soldiers.* These, on the other hand, were received with a torrent of stones, melted lead, and lighted torches from the ramparts, and beams pointed with iron were driven against the chariots; and thus the siege went on from month to month, almost every day signalised by deeds of ferocious daring on the part of the assailants, and of romantic devotion on that of the besieged.

Among the warriors who had rallied in the hour of need around the national standard, there were many of those daring and desperate spirits who might be said to be the rude ancestors of the knights errant of later times. Chiefs dispossessed of their estates, spendthrifts who had dissipated their patrimony, sons whose only succession was the sword and shield of their fathers—men of all descriptions, driven into the arms of adventure by their follies or misfortunes, eagerly crowded into the threatened city. Some few were impelled by the loftier motives of patriotism to fly to the rescue of the capital; and a number, smaller still, in that rude age, consisted of young men panting for valourous distinction, who courted danger wherever its aspect was most terrible or splendid.

Among these last was a youth whose name was Eriland. His ancestors had been high officers in the court of Charlemagne; but later, the fatal battle of Fontenay and the succeeding dissensions had scattered the family, and rent away their estates; and Eriland, at the date of the siege of Paris, found his possessions reduced to a horse, a hawk, a hound, and a good sword. Being a German by descent, and at any rate the inheritor of some of the prejudices of Charlemagne, he both disliked and despised the French; and this, in conjunction with a certain reckless and even

* Abbo, de Bellis Parisiacæ urbis, l. 1.

aimless courage, gave an air of haughtiness to his manner, which, unsupported as it was either by wealth, dignity, or reputation in arms, repelled and almost disgusted.

In the first few months of the siege, therefore, he found himself alone even in the crowded city. In the defence of the walls, and the sorties from the gates, he played his part like a skilful and gallant soldier, and amused himself between whiles with a solitary march upon the ramparts. But this mode of life soon began to grow flat and wearisome; the same objects presented themselves continually to his eyes; the very dangers day after day, were the same, and Eriland at last felt a sensation of restraint and confinement as he looked round the narrow circle of his prison-island, and panted for the freedom of the fields, where heads were defended by bucklers instead of stone walls.

The Count Odon, in the meantime, did everything in his power to introduce and support a spirit at once of union and rivalry in the garrison: and he resorted for this purpose to means which betrayed a policy more refined than that of the age he lived in.

His sister Adèle, a young woman at once of admirable beauty and extraordinary talent, was his principal agent; and by her assistance a little court was speedily formed in the beleaguered city, in which amusement, the ostensible object, was rendered subservient to more important purposes. Here the fair and the brave met in daily intercourse; no languid interval of action afforded time for recollections and regrets; the pomp with which the ceremonials of meeting were conducted, lent a zest to the charms of society; and the very difficulties of form and publicity with which beauty was hedged round from her admirers, gave additional, though imaginary, lustre to the proud eyes that "rained influence" on the beholders.

Not suddenly, however, was all this effected. A court of at least comparative refinement was not called at once into existence in a besieged city, and at a period when so long a course of foreign aggressions and civil broils had thrown a still wilder air over the manners of a barbarous age. Every day some nicer

adjustment was made of the true balance of the sexes—every day some new polish was given to the uneven surface of society, partly by the tact of the mistress of the ceremonies, and partly by the effect of simple collision. The consequence was speedily felt, not only in taming the impatient spirits of the garrison, but in the greater vigour and enthusiasm infused into the defence. The chiefs, in a sally, fought with the consciousness that those noble and lovely eyes were fixed upon them from the walls which they were to meet publicly on their return; and thus an inseparable connexion took place between the smiles of the fair and the deeds of the brave, and war became a pastime as well as a labour—a game, of which beauty was the prize.

The pride, reserve, and mere indifference with which, among the whole body of the defenders of the place, a single handsome young soldier kept aloof from these new festivities, could not escape observation. In Eriland, Adèle encountered the first obstacle she had yet met, and with the enthusiasm of genius she applied herself to the task of overcoming his obstinacy. The young man suddenly found himself in a singular situation. One day his taste was consulted, and his society solicited; and the next, when he entered upon the scene with the air of a personage of consequence, he was unnoticed or overlooked. By turns his self-love was wounded, and his curiosity piqued. Was he really unqualified to assume a permanent place in the rude society which aped the manners of a court? Who and what was this would-be queen, this barbarian compound of Gaul and Roman, who affected to dispense the favours and the slights of royalty? His thoughts and his eyes were thus drawn to the young Adèle, and a half-pleasing, half-painful shiver ran through his frame when these instinctive questions were answered.

Adèle was no would-be queen, but a right royal woman of nature's own crowning. Her stature was commanding; her air divided between grace and majesty; her locks were like a rich cloud turned into gold by the sun; her forehead was lofty, and pale, and smoother than the sea before the winds were born; and her eyes were of as bright and holy a blue as ever painted the

heavens. Eriland received the portrait upon his heart, touch by touch, trait by trait ; and at last he felt that the deepest injury he could sustain from the sword of the foe piercing into the fountain of his life would be the destruction of that glorious picture.

Adèle herself was insensible for a time of the peril of allowing her thoughts to dwell upon the proud and handsome stranger ; but at length her manner became colder, the intimacy which had insensibly begun was broken off, and Eriland, with indignant grief, yet unabating love, found himself to all appearance an object of indifference, if not contempt, with his imperious mistress. Sometimes, however, even in the midst of his worst fortune, an intervening moment either of pity or weakness would restore him to all he had lost ; and, intoxicated with his happiness, he forgot everything but love and hope. On one of these occasions he received as a gift a favourite hawk from Adèle ; and transported with his triumph, he only waited till the next interview to press his suit with open ardour. No opportunity, however, came ; she avoided him with skill and resolution ; and Eriland, as he reflected on certain circumstances that had attended the gift, was devoured with mortification.

Some time before, a practice had been introduced into the society, which, being found in all ages and countries, must be considered as both proper and natural. This was for the lover to propitiate his mistress by a present. The chiefs vied with each other in liberality as fiercely as they had done in arms, and he who had no jewels to bestow felt all the pangs of shame and defeat. Eriland, after considering his case with great perturbation, and half resolving to slide down the wall at night and steal a spoil from the enemy's camp, at length determined to bestow his hawk, a magnificent and valuable bird, where he had already given his heart, and this piece of generosity was loudly applauded by the whole court. The return which Adèle had now made, received at first as matter of triumph and exultation, when taken in conjunction with the distance she preserved, seemed a downright insult to his poverty ; and Eriland looked bitterly at the bells and chains with which the claws and neck of the beautiful creature sparkled,

and the rings of emeralds and sapphires, inlaid in bright copper, with which it was adorned, as so many confirmatory evidences of his degradation.

In this mood of mind, it was with a fierce joy he one day heard that a general attack was intended to be made by the enemy on the following morning; and although he had for some time studiously absented himself from the soirées of his Princess, he now resolved to drink one last draught of inspiration from her haughty eyes, and then rush into the battle, determined to conquer her esteem, or lose his love and his life together.

A spectator would not have been able to conjecture, from the appearance that evening of the little court of Adèle, that a struggle was so nearly at hand which, in all probability, would decide the fate of the city. The laugh and the jest went lightly round; lays were sung and legends recited of the olden time; warriors whispered soft tales in ladies' ears, and ladies blushed and smiled while they listened. Although the formal Vows of the Pheasant had not yet come into fashion, the chiefs were not slow in promising wonders to their mistresses; and the latter amused themselves with imposing tasks upon their lovers, to be executed in the expected sally. One desired a pebble from the opposite bank of the river; another longed for a branch of a tree which grew near the enemy's camp; and a third charged her servant with an ironical message to one of the Norman leaders, desiring him, during its delivery, to strike three blows upon the Pagan's shield. Adèle gave some trifling commission of this kind to almost every one present; and as the Count Odon remarked the air of absolute devotion with which his sister's commands were listened to, a flush of pride rose into his brow. Conscious that the admiring eyes of her brother, whom she herself admired more than any human being, were fixed upon her, she became more wildly gay, and gave more extravagant scope to her imagination.

"Listen, Sirs," said she: "there is one thing I had forgotten—a very trifle, it is true, and hardly worth the asking, but there may be some one here who will condescend to the task for the sake of Adèle."

"Name it!—name it!" cried the chiefs, and the circle narrowed round her as they spoke.

"There is a tent," she continued, "at the eastern angle of the Norman camp, distinguished from the rest by the splendour of its appearance, and the wide open area that encircles it, guarded by a double wall of huts. Except on particular nights, when the idolatrous fires are blazing, and the heathens gather into this enclosure for the performance of their unholy rites, the sole inhabitants of the tent are an aged woman of lofty stature, and a young child. The former appears to be even as a priestess among this unbelieving people, and either the mother of the infant or a nurse appointed to tend and care for him." Adèle paused, and glanced carelessly round among the crowd of admiring hearers.

"Speak!" cried they, with one voice; "command—we are ready!"

"I would that some one," said the spoiled beauty, "would bring me that Pagan boy for a foot-page!" The chiefs were silent, some from surprise, and some in the belief that she had spoken in jest, so madly desperate did the enterprise appear; but the next moment Eriland stepped into the circle.

"Madam," said he, with a low obeisance, "if I return from to-morrow's sally a living man, I will lay that infant at your feet!" A flush of triumph rose into Adèle's face, but was instantaneously succeeded by a deadly paleness. Her brother's eyes were observed to sparkle, and his cheek to glow, as he looked on at a little distance—and perhaps at that moment he beheld the first phantom-gleam of the kingly crown which was destined one day to alight upon the brow of the Count of Paris. Eriland retired when he had spoken, amidst the applause of the ladies and the concealed ridicule of the chiefs, and immediately after, warned by the usual evening blast from the ramparts, the assembly broke up.

The next morning, as a loud, long peal of the horn from the towers of the city announced the break of day, every head started from every pillow, and the besieged crowded to the walls to watch with eager interest the first stir in the enemy's camp. Among these spectators the earliest foot challenged by the sentry was that of the daughter of the Count of Paris. Wrapped in a dark cloak,

she traversed the ramparts alone from tower to tower ; and even after the other ladies had made their appearance, she swept past them with a silent salute. When the morning became lighter, she joined for a moment the different knots of cavaliers as they gathered upon the walls to speculate on the approaching events ; but, turning away successively from each, she appeared to look impatiently for some one who had not yet appeared. It was observed that her face was unusually pale, and her eyes unusually bright ; and instead of the proud swanlike motion by which she had been before distinguished from all other women of the city, her walk was unsteady and irregular, and her gait sudden and constrained. When seen some time after, her face was no longer pale, and her eyes no longer bright. A deep and feverish flush sat upon her cheeks, but her manner was calm and even severe ; she neither sought nor shunned the various parties promenading on the walks, but conversed in a calm, cold tone of the aspect of affairs.

As the mists of early morning floated slowly away from the enemy's camp, like a curtain whose rising is destined to reveal the events of some high and stirring tragedy, it was clearly perceived that the expectations of the besieged were about to be realized. Men, women, and children—all were in motion ; even the infant whose earliest breath had been drawn upon these hostile fields, with the trumpet of literal war for his first toy, and the shout of battle for his first lullaby, was seen staggering to the rear with some burthen of fancied value. Here, groups of men were seated on the ground examining the tension of their bows, sharpening their swords, and pointing their arrows ; there, parties of both sexes were hanging in clusters upon their rude fortifications, repairing the breaches with stones and mud ; and behind, a countless multitude were removing the valuables, together with the sick and infirm, to the rear. The confusion in the camp cleared gradually away with the morning twilight, and by the time it was completely daylight, the Normans were seen arranged in regular masses under the chiefs of their tribes.

The wooden tower which defended the entrance of the northern

bridge was the destined object of attack ; and here, as well as on the bridge itself, the bravest of the cavaliers and the most skilful of the bowmen were posted. The injuries which this part of the fortifications had received from the engines of the besiegers were now remedied as well as their nature permitted ; the ditch was cleared of rubbish and considerably deepened, and every other precaution which prudence and experience could suggest put in practice. Count Odon, therefore, in spite of the numbers of the enemy and their unusually skilful order and compact array, was so sanguine of success, that he already gave commands respecting the sally, which was to be made at the first symptom of disorder in the ranks of the enemy.

"See!" cried he to the young chiefs around him, "our mistresses are looking at us!" and, turning their eyes to the walls, the ladies were seen, arrayed in all the bravery of the time, clustering upon one of the towers. Odon made a signal with his sword, and his sister, rising amidst the fair group, threw a handful of flowers towards their defenders ; the dames waved their scarves and kissed their hands ; a blast of the morning wind blew cheerily over the ramparts, and the banner of Saint Martin, planted upon the ladies' tower, rolled suddenly out its gallant folds and waved over their heads. Odon sprang to the summitt of the wooden tower, and threw a proud and rapid glance upon the imposing scene.

"France ! France !" shouted he in a voice of fierce exultation.

"Mont-joie Saint Martin !" replied the cavaliers, and their war cry rolled like a peal of thunder over the Norman camp.

The invaders were not slow of answering the signal, and in another instant their whole force was in motion. They advanced to the walls in successive bodies, forming solid oblong squares, and in the order of the tortoise, each man covering his head with his buckler. The ditch, having been deepened, presented a more formidable obstacle than usual ; and the Normans, under a shower of stones and arrows from the besieged, attempted to fill it up with rubbish. The rubbish, however, had been in great part removed, and their materials soon failed. The moment was critical. To slide down one rugged and uneven side, and climb painfully

up the other, would expose them individually to the mark of the garrison, and destroy the regularity of the order by means of which they had hoped to gain the wall.* Loud murmurs rose amongst their ranks: the French shouted with joy, and the wild shrill cries of the Norman women answered behind.

"Bring forth our prisoners!" commanded one of the chiefs; and the men, women, and children who had been seized in the faubourg, before they had time to escape into the city, were driven like a herd of cattle to the brink of the ditch. A silence of some moments ensued. The garrison suspended their operations, and looked on with surprise mingled with a mysterious fear, while the North-men themselves held their breath in expectation. At length a voice of doom arose from the midst of the latter; the cry of the prisoners which followed was drowned in their bubbling blood; they were slaughtered as if by one blow, and cast into the ditch, and the fell tigers of the North rushed furiously over the passage constructed of their bodies, slippery with gore, and quivering in the last agonies of life.†

Bewildered with amazement and horror, the garrison saw the approach of the besiegers without striking a single blow, till an aged priest,‡ starting from the trance-like stupor, seized a javelin from a soldier, and calling with a loud voice upon the God of battles, hurled it at the foe. The weapon struck, in mid career, the savage who had given the order for the production of the prisoners, and he fell shuddering and yelling to the earth, and straightway yielded up his soul to the demons that awaited it.

* Ditches do not appear to have been dug at this period with precipitous sides, which were an improvement of more modern times. In "*Aucassin et Nicolette*," a work of the thirteenth century, in the collection of Le Grand d'Aussi, t. 3, p. 30 (and the same which was published by Sainte-Palaye, with the title of "*Amours du bon vieux tems*"), the heroine slides into a ditch and climbs out again without any other inconvenience than having her "pretty little hands and delicate feet *murdered* in more than twelve places."

† This fearful incident is taken from the Latin poem of Abbo, an eye-witness.

‡ Bishop Gosselin.

"For God and our country!" cried Odon, seizing upon the incident as a favourable omen—"For France and honour! Cavaliers, to the gates!"

"For vengeance!" replied they.

"For vengeance!" shouted the meanest serf and villein within the walls.

"For vengeance!" shrieked the women, tearing the chaplets from their brows, and rushing with dishevelled hair along the ramparts. The gates were instantly thrown open, and Count Odon, followed by the flower of the garrison, swept headlong upon the enemy. The force and suddenness of the attack were irresistible. The Normans gave way, but struggled furiously the while, yielding a hundred lives for every step of ground; till at length the same dreadful bridge which had permitted their advance sufficed for their retreat; and as the pursuers felt their feet wet with the still warm blood of their countrymen, their rage was turned to frenzy, and they fought more like famished wolves than men. They thus smote the invaders to the very inclosures of their camp, where Odon, by command, entreaty, and even force, at length prevailed upon them to retire from the bloodiest field that had yet been known in the siege of Paris.

Among the foremost of the pursuers of the enemy was Eriland. Determined to avoid the proud eyes of his mistress till he had done something worthy of her esteem and redeemed the desperate pledge he had given, this adventurer had remained in the arched gateway of the city from daybreak till the moment of the sally. By the shouting of either party, and the floating reports that met his ear, he was enabled to guess from time to time of the fate of the day, and the transactions so fearfully interesting to those who were eye-witnesses. Pre-occupied, however, with his own uneasy meditations, and confused by the very darkness of his retreat, and the undistinguishable echoes it returned of the strife without, he saw with almost as much surprise as satisfaction the extraordinary enthusiasm with which his companions in arms rushed to the sally.

One of the first to leave the gates, he maintained his advance during the whole of the pursuit; and when arrived at the

enemy's camp, he found himself fighting side by side with Count Odon.

"My brave friend!" said the latter, catching him by the arm, "we are now far enough—too far for prudence; help me to turn those glorious mad-caps back again, before they play the fool in earnest."

"Pardon me," replied Eriland, disengaging himself, "I have a promise to the Lady Adèle—my business lies farther. I counsel thee to return, however, and that suddenly; if speech will not do, strike and strike shrewdly, or, trust me, the swords that are now bristling behind this wall will render your trouble bootless;" and so saying, he sprang upon the uneven side of the mud fortification, and running a few paces along the summit, disappeared in the Norman camp.

The Count hesitated for an instant, during which he debated within himself whether he should not storm the entrenchments, and thus share the danger, or possibly avert the fate, of the brave stranger; but the prudence of the skilful leader, and perhaps the selfishness of the ambitious soldier, conquered this generous thought; and withdrawing his forces before the Normans had time to rally, he abandoned Eriland to the fortune which evil destiny and his own frenzied rashness had provided for him.

Eriland leaped from the wall into a crowd of enemies; but it consisted of men who had just rested from retreat, and who at the moment, smarting with wounds and shame, were ready to believe that the whole force of the French had scaled their mud barriers. They fled at the first sweep of his sword, and finding themselves unpursued, almost fancied that what they had beheld was some gory apparition from the ditch of the wooden tower.

In the meantime the adventurer pursued his way, among hovels, and tents, and mud walls, towards the habitation of the young child. The women and children fled shrieking from his rapid steps, and some of the warriors, returning tired and bloody from the fray to seek their individual homes, scarcely tarried to exchange a single blow before rushing back to the main body to warn them that their camp was in the hands of the French.

His limbs trembling with fatigue, and blood and sweat raining from his brows, Eriland at length found himself within the circular enclosure which appeared to be held so sacred in the superstitions of the heathen people. A hollow in the middle, apparently the place where the sacrificial fire was kindled, was surrounded by successive rows of great unhewn stones, stuck upright in the earth, and the warrior, who had just emerged from the field of slaughter, felt the hairs bristle upon his head as he detected, either really or in imagination, the marks of blood upon their jagged heads.



Farther on, the tent described by Adèle, and on which he had himself often gazed from the city walls, presented a striking and beautiful contrast. It was surrounded by a little grove of flowering shrubs, which filled the air with a delicious fragrance, and a stream, trickling from a fountain of carved stone, wandered murmuring

through the green parterre at the entrance. The pace of the adventurer slackened as he approached, and it was at last with noiseless tread and suppressed breathing that he entered the tent, where the silence seemed strange and almost preternatural. No paraphernalia of religion, however—no awe-inspiring gloom, such as he had been accustomed to in the usages of his own church, met his view; the open lattices admitted a softened light through leaves and flowers, and discovered nothing more terrible than a lovely infant sleeping in a cradle of wicker upon the floor. The features of the warrior relaxed at the sight; he gazed upon the little creature with a feeling of joy and tenderness; and taking it up cautiously in his arms, as one robs the nest of a bird, he fled with his prize.

At the instant a startling scream rang in his ears, and a woman, who had been concealed by the drapery of the tent, rushed after him. Her lofty figure was unbent by the load of years whose mark was on her brow, and she was arrayed in a costume of picturesque extravagance, and crowned with garlands of evergreen shrubs, whose leaves seemed to mock the tresses, as white as snow, with which they were twined. Eriland had hardly time to turn round to gaze upon this strange apparition, when he felt himself wounded by a lance she bore in her hand. Disdaining to combat with a woman, he merely parried, without returning, her furious blows; but finding at length the odds less unequal than he imagined, he was constrained to disarm her.

He would then have resumed his flight, but the old woman seizing on his mantle, with the most passionate entreaties and lamentations, partly in her own language and partly in his, besought his forbearance.

“A Christian and a soldier!” she exclaimed—“oh, thou who warrest with babes and women, bethink thee of thy honour and thy faith! By the sword of thy father—by the souls of thy young brothers and sisters—by thy home, thy altar, and thy God, have pity on the grey hairs of my age—have mercy on the child of a nation’s hope! He never injured thee nor thine; see, he smiles—yea, even now, he smiles in thy face! Hard-hearted man! does

not that holy beam fall like sunshine on thy soul to warm and to melt? Give him back to my arms, and receive the blessing of the aged and the stranger! Give me back the green leaf of promise—the sweet bud of hope and delight! Give back my child—my life of life—my own—my beautiful—my boy, my boy!" and she threw herself at the feet of the warrior, tearing her white hairs, and weeping and lamenting, as if her heart would break. Eriland hesitated. The smiles of the young infant—the tears of the aged woman—the breath of the flowers and shrubs—the coolness of the air—the murmur of the water—all nature, animate and inanimate, conspired to shake his resolution. His soul was touched with pity; his eyes filled with tears; and pressing his trembling lip to the cheek of the babe, he restored it to its nurse, and sprang over the wall of the enclosure.

The panic had in the mean time subsided, and it was known that only a single stranger was in the camp. Guards were stationed at every possible avenue of escape, and spies posted on the roofs of the houses to give notice of the appearance of the prey; while a tumultuous crowd rolled like a stormy flood through the camp, every individual quivering with rage, and hungering and thirsting after vengeance. Eriland had no sooner left the enclosure than he was descried; and in a few moments more he saw the gleam of weapons amidst the tents, and heard the near tread of his executioners, who rushed towards him yelling like famished wolves.

The city walls were visible from where he stood, and the tower was still crowded with ladies, the proud banner of St. Martin floating over their heads. A thousand thoughts swept across the heart of the warrior as if at one instant. His dreams of fame—his youth, unripe and unrenowned—his presumptuous love—his obscure and unpitied death!

"Adèle!" he exclaimed aloud, looking with straining eyes towards the city—"lovely and beloved! Oh, would that thou couldst see me die! Yet thou wilt guess my fate, and my unstained name will live in thy memory. Farewell, noble banner of France!—long mayst thou wave over strong walls and brave

hearts! Farewell, my true comrades in arms! Farewell the light of day, the song of birds, and the sweet rush of waters! Farewell, my life!" and grasping his sword with both hands, the stout cavalier shouted his battle-cry, and rushed into the midst of his enemies.

At this moment a voice was heard behind which rose distinct and terrible above the yells of the multitude, and, springing over the wall of the enclosure where Eriland had descended, a gigantic Norman flung himself into the midst of the fray. The people fell back at his command with habitual obedience, conceiving, it is supposed, that he claimed to himself the prerogative of dispatching the prisoner; but when they saw that his purpose was to save rather than destroy, they returned with renewed fury to the assault. With entreaties mingled with imprecations and menaces, the giant at first endeavoured to shield his protégé; but when these were unavailing, he had recourse to blows; and they cut their way through the half-yielding, half-resisting mob to the outer wall. Eriland grasped the hand of his unknown friend; and the two warriors looked for a moment in one another's faces with an expression of admiration and esteem.

"The young child," said the Norman, "sent thee this rescue."

"To thee, notwithstanding," replied Eriland, "I owe a life;" and jumping over the fortifications, he regained the city.

CHAPTER II.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

LOVELACE.

THE recreant slave!" thought Adèle, as she watched the operations of the besiegers from the ladies' tower—"not one blow will he strike for his honour or his love. Why, the time has been, if minstrels lie not, when a woman's smile was worth a man's life! Not that I would have him die—no, God and good

saints forbid! And yet why, then, do I wish to see him try to hold to a promise vain and frantic in the attempt, and impossible of performance, and which, had he a life for every hair on his head, would sacrifice them all? What have I to do with the courage or cowardice of this stranger? What is he to me? What can he be to me? Alas! what dream is this which in flying from my eyes draws after it my happiness? Truly, it is time for maidens to start and think, when they feel that a man's honour is dearer to them than his blood!"

But these meditations were dissipated, like the gossamer network of the dawn before a hurricane, by the fearful events which followed, for Adèle was an eye-witness of the massacre of the prisoners. How, at that moment, did she hate the peculiarity of sex, which froze her limbs while her blood boiled! She could but smite the hell-hounds with the lightning of her eye—she could but curse them with the curses of her woman's heart—she could but tear the garlands from her hair, and trample them in the dust—she could but shriek till her brain whirled and her voice was lost. When the sally of the garrison was made, she followed it with her eyes and her soul; her spirit was in the mêlée directing the blow, and deepening the wound; she wavered unconsciously with the wavering of the phalanx; she struck and hewed the air with her clenched hands; and shouted the war-cry of her country till the ramparts rung.

"Noble cavalier!" she exclaimed, on recognising Eriland the foremost of the fight,—“how have I wronged thee! On, gallant heart—strike for vengeance and for me! Ha—well done! Thine—thine—I am thine for that! Forward, my lord and my love—Saint Martin for Eriland!” When the warriors returned, slowly and heavily, like gorged vultures from a feast of blood, she ran to the gate to meet them, and sprang into the arms of Count Odon. Her keen glance detected in an instant that one was missing whom she would fain have clasped in an embrace as warm and true, and she looked in speechless terror into her brother's face.

“Thou hast lost me, Adèle,” said he, his thoughts busy in the

same quarter, "the best cavalier in the garrison. But how? He is but one, we have still enough.—Why what is this? Thy cheek is white, thine eyes are dim, thy limbs tremble! By the rood, it is well that Eriland lies where he does, or we should have had him presently in the—— Hark ye, girl; has thou forgotten what thou art, and what thou wilt be? Come this way—a word Madam——" And seizing her arm roughly, he led her to her chamber, where he entered into a more minute detail than he had yet given, of those ambitious plans which soon after seated him on a throne. With these, however, this tale is unconnected, excepting in so far as their existence affected the fate of the cavalier whose story it is intended to relate. Adèle went forth again, and received the surviving chiefs with a courtesy that might well have become a princess; but although her words and manner were thus adjusted at her father's pleasure, no command of his, and no effort of her own, could restore the banished hue to her cheek, or the lustre to her eye.

While thus occupied, however, a voice suddenly struck upon her ear which returned the red tide of life in a deluge to her face. She repressed with difficulty a shriek which was about to break from her lips, and ran hastily to her own apartment. It chanced that at the moment a child of one of the women of the city began to cry, and a feeling of pride mingled with her joyful astonishment, as she believed that the devoted cavalier had performed his promise. This idea made the task more difficult of schooling her heart according to her brother's command; but in the afternoon, when she sat like an actual queen prepared to admit the homage of her court, and receive publicly that unequivocal token of the most absolute devotion, even love was lost in all-powerful vanity.

The chiefs, one by one, redeemed their promises; and the ladies twined the branches in their hair which had been plucked from such dangerous shrubs, and vowed to preserve the pebbles, bought at so heavy a price of blood, as their most esteemed jewels. Adèle had speedily a lapful of such tokens; and as each warrior raised her fair hand to his lips, he felt overjoyed at receiving so extravagant a price for his gear. Eriland at length stood alone,

dangling his sword, and biting his lips with embarrassment and vexation.

"Plague take that heathen priestess," thought he, "with her doleful cries and white hairs! Were I by her side now, she would not find me so chicken-hearted. By the holy rood! were it my own brother's child, I would steal it. Curse on the Norman giant, and the father that begot him!" continued he, as he found that the eyes of the whole party were turned towards him in expectation. "What in the name of all the saints had he to do in the matter? Who asked him to interfere! Oh, would that I were in the midst of them now! Would that they had cut me into small pieces, or baked me in their hellish fire against supper-time!"

"Brave Eriland," said his mistress, with some surprise, and in as haughty a tone as she could assume,—“touching that small boon I begged of thee yesternight, where, I pray thee, hast thou bestowed the little heathen page?”

"Madam," replied the adventurer, "the Count Odon is my witness that I was actually within the enclosures of the enemy's camp, and on thy errand, and none other. I reached the tent, where I saw certain stones standing on end—and water—and shrubs—and pleasant-smelling flowers—and the young child in a wicker cradle."

"Go on—go on!" cried Adèle. "I vow, a most pleasant passage, and described to the life."

"Well, Madam," continued Eriland, hesitating, "I took up the young child in my arms—and then a woman (may she die in her sins!) begged me to leave him alone—and—and——"

"Go on!" cried the whole company.

"By the blessed mother of God!" said the cavalier, "I have nothing more to tell. Honour me, Madam, by commanding something else, and if my blood can pay the price, it shall be thine; but I pray thee, in all earnestness and humility, never again to desire me to steal thee a child." A shout of laughter rang through the room at this lame conclusion; and Adèle for the moment felt the indignation her eyes expressed.

"When I have again a request to make," said she with

some bitterness, "I shall apply to those who will esteem it more."

"That is impossible!" exclaimed Eriland, with heat, "and I will maintain it to be so with my sword or my lance, on foot or on horseback, against any cavalier here present." Several of the chiefs thus challenged, sprang forward to solicit the lady to vouchsafe them the honour of being her champion; and a scene of confusion ensued which threatened to end in mischief. Count Odon at length succeeded in restoring peace, or at least in preventing open war; and Eriland, mortified and indignant, strode out of the room with a swelling heart and a gloomy brow.

The ambitious Count found it easy to convert this incident into a means of estranging Eriland from the parties of the little Court, and even the acquaintance of his sister, without including himself in the feelings of hostility he might awaken. He even ventured to drop some hints of the unreasonableness of women, and the folly of those who perilled blood and life for anything less noble than fame or country, and of the envy and rancour engendered even in the bravest bosoms, when such effeminate playthings as a lady's smile come into question. This mode of policy worked only in one of the two ways contemplated by the Count. His sister lost an avowed lover, and he, at the same moment, an accomplished soldier. Eriland had now no *motive* for exertion. Ambition—love of fame—honour—whatever Odon meant to have substituted as the inspirer of his actions, could find no room in a heart already filled with Adèle; for the politician was deceived, when he imagined that love had ceased to exist because its external indications were withdrawn.

Eriland, while religiously believing that his mistress, had she been aware of all the circumstances of his visit to the Norman camp, and the feelings they gave rise to, would have applauded rather than blamed his conduct, was yet prevented by pride, resentment, shame, and conscious poverty, from intruding unsought an explanation. Day after day he waited for some message from Adèle, and watched, when he saw her, for some look which he might construe into a question. Messages came not; looks were

cold and silent; the time for explanation passed away; new themes appeared to engross her mind; new sallies were made, and new trophies taken; and Eriland, passing through the intermediate stages of heat and cold, self-reproach, pride, anger, grief, regret, sunk at last into a lethargy. His occupation was gone. At the feast, when present in person, which was rarely, he was absent in mind; in the assault, he stood at his post like a mechanic in the dull round of his trade; in the sally, he had the air of a man moving about for exercise, and determined to stir not a step farther than the physician had commanded; and at length, with the unanimous consent of the whole garrison, he received the title of the *Fainéant Cavalier*.

The Normans, in the meantime, relaxed gradually in their offensive operations, and at length seemed to pursue the siege more as a matter of form than with any serious determination. It was ardently hoped, therefore, in the city, that on the first appearance of actual winter, which might now be daily expected, they would retire in despair to their strongholds on the coast. The most extravagant joy prevailed in the garrison; preparations already began to be made by individuals for removal to their own homes; and the cavaliers, undisturbed by the enemy, occupied their leisure in laying closer siege to their mistresses, and endeavouring to bring their love matters to a triumphant close with those of the war.

The favourable auguries of the French seemed to be confirmed at every glance taken from the walls at the enemy's camp. The Normans were seen amusing themselves with their great fires on the shore, and constructing boats, apparently for the purpose of returning down the river. One bark in particular, of an enormous size and very singular form, appeared to occupy much of their attention, and became therefore an object of proportionable curiosity to the idlers on the ramparts. Being without masts, or apparent accommodation for the crew, it was at first conjectured to be a luggage vessel, intended to be towed down by the others; but as every day after it was completely finished its position was removed nearer the city, this idea was found to be erroneous.

No danger, however, was augured from this phenomenon; the

enemy were before in no want of transports ; and a compact bridge of boats might have been constructed in two hours, if they had thought it desirable to direct their operations against the city walls, so much stronger than those of the tower which had hitherto baffled their attempts. This vessel, besides, was alone, and it could not have held thirty men, even supposing that places were concealed for them below the deck. What appeared surprising was, that the other new craft, amounting to five or six in number, were destroyed by fire, one by one, as soon as finished. Sometimes this sacrifice was made at night, and the effect was magnificent beyond conception. The flames, evidently aided by chemical means, burst in some cases with a rush and a roar, in one enormous jet, to the heavens. The river, for the moment, seemed a mass of molten gold ; the red light streamed on the wild figures and picturesque costumes of the Normans, and disclosed their city camp, with the roofs of its huts and the ramparts of its mud-fortifications crowded with women and children. The next instant all was darkness and night, deeper by contrast than before. It was observed that after such sudden explosions a profound silence was maintained among the besiegers, and nothing was heard save the bubbling and hissing of the waters as the red embers sunk sullenly in the river ; but when a longer space was occupied by the fire, and the flames darted forth in fierce and numerous jets before consuming the bark, a shout pealed from the host that seemed to shake the very heavens.

The garrison at length came to the conclusion that these idle operations were nothing more than ceremonies peculiar to the heathen faith of their enemies ; and that the larger bark, which now remained alone, was destined to perform a part in some infernal conjurations to be resorted to as the closing act of this bootless siege. Spiritual weapons, therefore, were had recourse to as the only instruments of effect against spiritual enemies ; and for some days a religious festival was held in the city, where nothing was to be seen but processions, banners, and reliques, and nothing heard but the tinkling of bells and the chanting of hymns and prayers.

One dark and windy afternoon, when one of these processions, in making the tour of the walls, stopped opposite the river, Eriland found himself placed accidentally near his lost mistress.

"Will the gallant Eriland," said she, addressing him suddenly, and in a kinder voice than usual,—“he who is surnamed the Fainéant Cavalier, favour us with his opinion of the nature and purpose of that mysterious bark, which sits so still and solemn on the surges before us?”

"I know not, Madam," replied Eriland, "or rather, I do know that it sits there for no good."

"There is at least ingenuity," remarked the lady, "in the supposition. But I fear me thou hast learnt uncharitableness in the course of thy deep and protracted meditations, surely thou dost less than justice to our Norman friends, in suspecting them of harbouring aught of evil purpose against their neighbours!"

"What thou hast spoken in jest and sarcasm," said Eriland, "the Count Odon, it seems to me, would repeat in right earnest. Were I the governor of the city, or more nearly interested in its defence than for my own worthless safety, I would be beforehand with the Normans, be their intent what it may, and request some one to swim out with a lighted torch in his teeth, and burn that bark to the water's edge."

"Ha!" exclaimed Adèle, and a deep and confidential glance passed between her and the adviser. Eriland's cheek flushed, and he bent eagerly forward to drink in the command with which he hoped to be honoured.

"I know not," said she at last, after a momentary struggle; "I have no skill of such matters, but methinks the counsellor, supposing him sincere, should for his own sake adopt what would seem, at least to an inexperienced maiden, no unreasonable precaution." Eriland's chest fell, though without any audible sigh, but the next moment, fortifying himself with his wounded pride, he replied coldly—

"It is somewhat late in the day for a bath, and besides, the water, no doubt, begins to smack shrewdly of winter, or one might

even venture ;” and with an affected shiver, the *fainéant* cavalier lounged to another part of the ramparts.

Adèle seemed for an instant in the act of following him, but stopped suddenly short, and began hurriedly to address another on the same subject. Some unacknowledged feeling, however, prevented her from finishing the sentence ; she looked with a sigh to the quarter where Eriland had vanished, and the next moment the priests began to chant, and the procession passed on.

That night, when the city was buried in the profound sleep of fancied security, a fierce and sudden blast from the walls startled the inhabitants. Echoed almost instantaneously from tower to tower, the sound became more alarming, and in a few minutes the ramparts were crowded with gazers. The night was dark and gusty ; and if the stir on the walls did not drown the sounds without, all was silent in the enemy’s camp. Nothing could at first be descried indicative of danger, till, following the finger of the sentinels with their eyes, the chiefs discovered a black and undefined object moving on the water towards the bridge. Cursing the imprudence which had interrupted the salutary custom of kindling alarm fires on the ramparts, they flung down some lighted torches, which exhibited for an instant, before hissing in the water, the mysterious bark, moved along by men swimming at the sides.

A shower of arrows was immediately directed towards the strange visitor, but apparently without effect, for it continued its crawling motion undisturbed ; and at length, as the besieged succeeded in kindling a strong blaze on the wall near the bridge, the line of swimmers was observed to be unbroken.

By the assistance of the light, however, which was now flung steadily upon the river, the firing was renewed with greater success both from the walls and the wooden tower, and one by one this forlorn hope of the Normans was picked off from the vessel’s side. The men, as they were struck, loosed their holds without a struggle, tumbled for a moment on the surge, and died in silence. Only a single swimmer remained of all the desperate crew, as the bark reached the bridge ; the arrows sung round his head for

some moments without effect ; but at length when his vessel ran foul of the wooden work of the construction, which was raised from a stone foundation reaching to the water's edge, he too fell headlong into the river, and his body was washed ashore on the opposite side, where it lay motionless on the stones like a spectator of the event.

A shout rose from the people on the bridge and the walls as they witnessed this event, and they watched a few moments, in joyful expectation of seeing the fateful boat drift harmless down the tide. It had already, however, been made fast, and with every rise of the surge some new part of the machinery became entangled with the bridge, from which the defenders fled in dismay, some taking refuge in the city, and some in the wooden tower.

The eyes of the besiegers were fixed by a kind of fascination upon the black and fearful object which thus held in its grim embrace the access to the city, and the connecting link between the latter and its hitherto impregnable tower of defence. The moment was awful, but although pregnant with alarm, was still not destitute of hope. The train which doubtless lurked in the vessel was apparently unfired. A second shout burst from the lips of the besieged, as the conviction seemed to dart simultaneously upon their minds, and the bridge was again manned, and the hasty blows of stakes and hatchets resounded on all sides.

Presently, however, some of the men engaged in this service were seen to sink fainting upon the bridge, and two or three tumbled headlong into the river. The whole at length fled hastily from a suffocating stench which rose from the vessel, more terrible than the weapons of human enemies ; and the defensive operations were confined to a discharge of stones, beams of timber, and buckets of water from the walls.

A vapour was soon observed rising as if from under the bridge, thin and pale like the fog in the dawn ; but gradually its colour darkened, and it mounted in slow successive columns for a considerable distance, then opened, spread, and fell in showers of thick smoke over the river and city. Gleaming like stars through

this ominous cloud, a multitude of lights now appeared at once in the direction of the Norman fleet, although their encampment still lay as before shrouded in darkness, and the besieged, divided between the perils of fire and sword, scarcely knew on which side to turn. The dark body of smoke which hung over the bridge and the river in one undistinguishable mass, was at length illumined by some faint flashes of light; these became broader and brighter, till blending as if into one, they rose in a single stupendous column to the heavens, and revealed to the spectators, with all the precision of daylight, the details of the scene.

The mysterious bark, though rent and shattered, still held on with a death-grip to the bridge; and the starting and splitting timbers of the latter seemed to shrink and shriek with fear and agony. In some places the fire had fairly caught; and although there the flames were speedily extinguished by the torrents of water discharged from above, yet the wood continued to burn with a fierce red heat. Everything served to convince the French that the critical moment was arrived, and a fresh detachment of the bravest of the garrison was sent to the fatal bridge, where suffocation was to be dared in so many shapes of smoke, water, and stench.*

The last and most terrible of all these, however, was now coming end; and the air, purified by the mightier demon of fire, threatened destruction only by intensity of heat. The blows and the therefore, of the French rang fast and furious over the river, although sometimes a cavalier was forced to fly to one of the sides to inhale the fresh air, he invariably returned to the attack with redoubled vigour.

During the whole of these transactions, the fainéant cavalier stood upon the ramparts on the same spot, looking with imperturbable calmness upon the scene below. His arms were crossed loungingly upon his breast; his sword hung motionless by his side; and his buckler, planted against the parapet, served as a support for his knee. The varying success of the defenders, and

* Abbo, de Bell. Par. Carm.

the splitting and roaring of the hell-born machine, accompanied by corresponding shouts and shrieks from every throat in the city, had no effect on him; and even some bitter sarcasms levelled at him by his sometime mistress, as she passed and repassed in an agony of rage and fear, produced not a single visible change in his aspect.

When at length, however, it became apparent that the efforts of the cavaliers on the bridge were about to be attended with success, Eriland was observed so far to be affected by the circumstance, as to unfold his arms, and look down with an expression of interest. The huge iron grappings with which the machine at one end had been fastened to the timber-work, had in fact been knocked away by the hatchets of the defenders. The loose chains rattled, the red-hot iron hissed as it sank into the water, and a shout of triumph broke from the citizens. This was by far the most important of the fastenings, not merely on account of the strength of the machinery, but because it was supposed, from the appearance of the bark in this place, that a mine of combustibles still lurked there unexploded. For this reason the blows of the defenders had been directed, not merely by sound policy, but by the fury of desperation, to a quarter so fraught with doom; and when they at last witnessed the success of their efforts, it was with the exulting confidence of ultimate victory that they sprang to the demolition of the other fastenings.

It has been said that the body of the last of the rowers was flung upon the bank by the current; and there indeed it lay during the whole of the subsequent operations, with somewhat of the air of a lazy spectator of a tragedy. One who was curious in contrasts and resemblances might have detected some moral affinity in the appearance throughout of the dead Norman on one side and the fainéant cavalier on the other; but, at the epoch at which we have arrived, an analogy of a still more curious nature presented itself. The Frenchman, as has been said, unfolded his arms, and looked over the ramparts, as if he had been actually awake; and the limbs of the Norman corpse, which before seemed to have been nailed to the bank, now rose and fell with the rising

and falling of the waters. Whether owing to the greater agitation caused in the river by the swinging of the loosened bark or not, the trunk itself as well as the limbs began presently to move. One moment a sudden rush of the vexed tide would raise up the legs, and the next it would shift the position of the head. Then the shoulders, alternately shrugging and drooping with the action of the waves, lost their equilibrium so far as to permit the body to wheel round and roll farther into the water; and presently, struck by some mightier dash of the current, the whole human wreck was afloat, and, drifting out into the stream, disappeared. "In another instant something black and round like a man's head was observed near the bark; and Eriland and Adèle, who chanced to be near each other on the ramparts looking on, exchanged the same kind of sudden and confidential glance which has been noted on a previous occasion. Neither, however, spoke; Eriland returned to his calm, deliberate scrutiny; and Adèle, putting back her hair from her eyes, gazed with soul and sense into the gulf.

In the meantime the defenders on the bridge had nearly effected their purpose. The bark began to reel and tremble at their strokes, and loop by loop the fastenings were undone, and clanked and hissed as they fell into the water. It was remarkable, however, that as one end of the accursed machine began to recede, the other, from which they had but a few minutes before entirely liberated themselves, returned spontaneously to the attack. No reasoning on winds or tides could account for this phenomenon; and the defenders, perspiring as much with superstitious fear as hard labour, continued to deal their desperate strokes where they stood, without daring so much as to turn their eyes towards the other end of the fire-ship, which every moment they expected to refasten upon the bridge.

"By the soul of the King!" cried Adèle, "if the heathen dog hath not gained some footing in the vessel, for all he is now invisible to us! She moves—she swings round by the fore fastenings—she nears the bridge—she grapples—she grapples! Oh, holy Saints, can this be aught more than magic or delusion?" While she spoke, the so lately liberated end of the fire-ship did

indeed touch the bridge for the second time, and the next moment the deck, which in this quarter had remained almost entire, was rent asunder, and a column of bright flame ascended to the heavens.

Dazzled and stupefied with the blaze, the cavaliers continued madly to shower their desperate blows where they stood ; but all who were not actively employed fled shrieking into the city. Of all the spectators, either on the ramparts or elsewhere, Adèle and Eriland alone had been able to trace the cause of so singular an effect ; and when the sudden glare and the breaking up of the planks discovered a great black head in the midst of the fire and smoke, all, save them, imagined it to be that of some unearthly agent appointed to conduct and watch over the operations of the hellish machine. The confidential glance was repeated between the cavalier and his mistress, but the *fainéant* remained true to his character.

"Eriland !" cried Adèle at last, after a momentary but terrible struggle, "fetch me that heathen's head, and I will forgive thee the Norman child !"

Eriland bounded from the earth like a man touched by enchantment, and, alighting on his knees before his mistress, kissed her hand. He then tore off his armour, and his outer habiliments, and snatching up a hatchet, sprang down the slope of the wall, and disappeared. Presently he was seen rushing along the bridge, overthrowing whomsoever he had the chance to meet, till at length he bounded upon the parapet right over the infernal machine, which by this time was vomiting its fiery entrails without intermission. He looked down for one moment into the gulf, and the next, raising his hatchet above his head with both hands, plunged into the flames.

At this instant the last of the fastenings, which occupied the defenders, gave way under their furious strokes, and the vessel swung with so heavy a strain upon the others, which had not yet fairly caught, that the whole broke off. But scarcely had the fire-ship begun to drift, when the last and mightiest contents of her womb came forth with an explosion which shook the city. The parent herself was

destroyed in the tremendous birth ; planks and chains were scattered like autumn leaves on the wind, and when the dense smoke, which for some time hung like a pall over the remains, became thin enough to receive illumination from the red fires which burnt around and within it, nought was seen entire of greater magnitude than an ordinary beam, save one huge fragment.

Into the interior of this the flames did not seem to have had the power to penetrate, but continued to hover and rush over the outside, as if seeking for an aperture of entrance. Within, notwithstanding, there seemed to be strife enough without such assistance ; the sound of furious blows was distinctly heard, and the whole mass waved and rocked with an impetus which belonged neither to the wind nor the tide. The flames without, and the strife within, at length effected their purpose, and the wreck parted in twain, when a naked Norman and a French cavalier were seen in the midst of the fire and smoke seated astride on the same plank.

The cavalier held his enemy by the throat with one hand, while with the other he held aloft a hatchet ready to descend upon his head ; and the Norman, apparently wounded and disabled, although a man of prodigious stature, only held up his hands for the purpose of breaking the blow. No sooner however had the sudden light streamed upon their combat, than the latter was seen to withdraw from his defensive position ; he folded his hands gravely and coolly, and looked his enemy in the face. As for the cavalier, he seemed to be turned into a statue ; the hatchet remained suspended in the air ; and he sat gazing into the eyes before him, as if compelled by the power of enchantment. The citizens pursued this singular spectacle in silence along their walls, while it drifted slowly down the current.

"In God's name," shouted they, "what does this mean ? Noble Eriland, art thou bewitched ? Strike, in the name of the Virgin ! Strike for France and for revenge ! Down with thy hatchet ! down with it—down !" Eriland obeyed the injunction, by letting the weapon drop into the river, and then sliding from the plank, he made slowly for the shore ; while the Norman, diving under the water to escape the arrows which the indignant citizens showered

upon him from the walls, rose at a safe distance, and wended slowly towards his camp by the light of the burning ship, which floated in innumerable fragments down the river.

CHAPTER III.

One effort more, one brave career,
Must close this race of mine !

SCOTT.

IT is in vain to struggle with my fate," thought Eriland. "This comes of mercy extended to the enemies of Christ ! That instant in which I listened to the entreaties of the heathen priestess, I delivered myself over, bound hand and foot, to the power of her enchantments. By what other means could it have happened, that, of all that innumerable host, the individual selected for sacrifice by Adèle should have proved to be the very giant who redeemed me from an obscure and fearful death within his own fortifications ? And what else than sorcery could have effected the bursting of the cabin at the very instant when I had disabled him, and might have hewn him into pieces in the dark without injury to my honour ? Well, well, well—if I have saved my honour, I have lost my love ; and so farewell, fair mistress—fare thee well, my proud and beautiful Adèle, for never more shall I again look thee in the eyes !"

This resolution saved him a good deal of mortification ; for the Count Odon, let into the secret of Eriland's new mission by his sister's frantic exclamations, when she saw her lover apparently blown out of the water, took care that little should accrue to him from his gallantry, beyond the accidents he had met with in the encounter.

Advices, in fact, had been received by the Count, through his emissaries at the German court, which completely confirmed his suspicions with regard to the real character of Charles le Gros, and the actual prospects of the country. Proud, selfish, and cowardly, disgustingly gluttonous, and altogether unpopular in appearance, manner, and habits, the Emperor had already estranged the affec-

tions of his subjects. In case of his death, either by nature or treason, a dismemberment of the empire would again take place ; and Odon, as the Count of Paris, would hold, nominally at least, and for the moment, the station of master of France, while the German and Italian dominions would in all probability fall into the gift of the Pope. How to convert appearances into realities—how to build an actual throne out of forms and circumstances—this was the question ; and Odon, throwing himself into the future with all the enthusiasm of genius, began already to plan alliances.

There were moments when Eriland, in spite of all his soldier-like simplicity, could not help thinking that Adèle must have been well satisfied with his courage and devotion ; but again, if this were the case what meant her continued silence ? Why did she avoid him—why refrain from the questions which it was but natural, under such circumstances, should be suggested to her thoughts ? What else was this than indifference ? Or, if aught of that love existed, which in happier hours he flattered himself to have seen through her maiden pride, what prevented its acknowledgment, after so long a period of service on his part, except the foul whisperings of interest ? Eriland fed upon these speculations till his brain became almost crazed ; and at length, determined to break through the enchantment which surrounded him in this unhappy city, he resolved to take the first opportunity of performing some exploit of signal daring, and then to turn his back upon his mistress for ever.

The winter had now fairly set in. The trees were stripped of their foliage, and the verdant carpet of nature, withdrawn from the fields, disclosed the bare, dark soil beneath. The wind howled along the waste, and the black and troubled waters of the river descended in a brawling torrent. The blast then became still, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain fell down in heavy and sullen streams. For six days the flood ceased not, and at last the saturated plains resembled a succession of lakes, into which rain courses were perpetually pouring from the hills and eminences around. The Seine rose day after day, till the banks could no longer confine its swollen waters. In some places

they overflowed the neighbouring country ; but towards Paris, where the shores were high and steep, they were seen sweeping majestically along, rising to the very lips of their channel, in black and unbroken volumes.

The wooden bridge at length was partly under water, but so strong were the works, and so calm the river, which moved only at the pace of its current, that no dangerous effects were anticipated, unless haply a storm should come to lash the smooth waves into fury. And the storm came. Low at first, and wildly mournful, was its voice, as it swept along its path ; the citizens raised their heads at midnight, when the ominous sound wailed upon their ear ; and the sentinel on the ramparts, with trembling lip and sinking heart, winded the alarm blast, which seemed but an echo of the moaning winds. Again were the fires lighted upon the walls, and again the citizens gazed from their ramparts with anxiety and terror upon the all-important bridge. The storm wailed and the river roared in vain ;—for a low, dull sound—the groaning of the planks and joists—smote more dolefully upon their hearts ; and at last, from examinations promptly made at the command of the governor by persons skilled in affairs of mechanical contrivance, it was ascertained that the works would not hold an hour beyond the dawn.

In this predicament, nothing was left to be done but to recall the renowned band which had so gloriously garrisoned the tower, barricade as completely as possible the city gates, and wait with patience for the rescue which was still expected at the hands of the cowardly and sluggish Emperor.

A messenger was accordingly despatched into the wooden tower, who with difficulty made his way over the already splitting timbers of the bridge, to advise its gallant defenders of the posture of affairs, absolve them of their desperate and now untenable trust, and request them to return into the city. He found the eleven cavaliers of high rank who had distinguished themselves in defence of the tower, already as well acquainted as himself with everything it concerned them to know ; they even predicted the precise time of the fall of the bridge, and pointed out from their loopholes

the crowded squadrons of the Normans gathering, and closing round them like birds of prey.

"Yet, tell the Count of Paris," said they, "that, deeply as we lament depriving him of assistance even so numerically slight as ours, we are constrained by our honour as cavaliers, and our vows as Christians, to die in defence of the tower we have hitherto garrisoned so successfully. We ask no succours which would be vain, and no supplies which would be useless; we are perfectly aware, that before the setting of to-morrow's sun this pile will be a heap of ruins, and that the visitor who seeks us here will find nothing to answer his inquiries save blood and ashes. Tell our comrades in arms that we dishonour them not in our deaths;—tell our friends and kinsmen that we loved them to the last;—tell our King and our countrymen that our parting thought was France, and our latest cry, Montjoye Saint Martin!" The envoy returned, blinded with tears of grief and admiration; and when he had told his tale, the voices of the devoted warriors beyond, who cried their war-cry in token of remembrance and farewell, were answered by sobs and lamentations from the whole city.*

The night came down in darkness and dismay. Not an eye was closed, not a head reclined upon the pillow. They who were permitted footing upon the walls thought themselves comparatively happy, although there they only enjoyed the privilege of seeing their misfortunes; while the bulk or rabble of the place were contented to watch in the streets, and gaze at, or question, when they durst, the returning great, whom they envied, no doubt, the superior knowledge indicated in their pale lips and haggard eyes. Innumerable lights were seen during the whole of the night in the Norman camp, which presented the appearance of an illuminated city; and between the pauses of the blast wild shouts were heard along the shore.

When the morning dawned, these sounds were accounted for by the battalions of the enemy being seen already under arms; while every hut and natural eminence in the vicinity were crowded by

* Abbo, de Bell. Par. Carm.

the women and children watching the effects of the storm. The planks of the bridge were in many places broken up, and the boiling flood rushed furiously between; while the whole construction, rocking and waving with the agitation of the river, seemed just in the act of being swept from its base. At this moment a cavalier, completely, and even fancifully, armed and accoutred, and bearing a beautiful falcon on his wrist, was seen stepping stately along the crowded walls, where he attracted the attention of every one he passed, by the strange incongruity exhibited by his air and dress with the scene. When he reached the place where Adèle and the other ladies of the court were standing, he stood still, and addressing the former :

"Madame," said he, with a grave and courteous obeisance, "thou didst twice honour me with thy commands—twice did I promise—and twice did I fail in the performance. It may be, that if certain circumstances were fully known to thee, which attended my adventures, they might abate, in some measure, the scorn with which thou hast since regarded me ; but of that it is not now my purpose to speak—let it pass. To crave a third trial would be both unskilful and dishonourable, and I have therefore imposed a task upon myself. The defence of that glorious tower, although bootless to the defenders, is of the last importance to the city, which may hourly expect the succours of the Emperor. I go there to add one other life to the sacrifice, and to interpose one other body as a bulwark between thee and the foe ; I go to compel thee to acknowledge, Adèle—yea, in spite of thy brother's soul, to acknowledge—that he who fought and fell on that spot—a holy place for ever in the memory of our countrymen—could have been no disloyal cavalier !" Eriland knelt, and kissed her passive hand ; then, plunging down the slope of the wall, disappeared in an instant.

"What is this ? Who spoke to me ?" cried Adèle, looking about like one awakened from a trance. "Eriland !" and she flashed an eagle glance on the faces around her—"Eriland ! Eriland !" she continued, till her voice rose into a wild, shrill scream. The gate opened below, and the cavalier was seen, with

hawk on wrist and sheathed sword by his side, stopping proudly upon the bridge, like a gallant for the field. The timbers rocked and yawned below his feet, the spray dashed over his head, and, by the time he had gained the middle, the whole fabric was rent from its support. A light run and a bold leap were sufficient to place him on the threshold of the wooden tower; and at the same moment the mighty fragments of the bridge were swept with a crash and a roar down the foaming river.

The tower was now within the clutches of the Normans, and with loud shouts their ranks closed round it, except at the side defended by the river, where they might still have been galled by arrows from the city walls. The storm, having done its work, died moaningly away; the sweep of the torrent became more monotonous and more slow, and all nature seemed to wait with a gloomy composure for the commencement of the tragedy which was to ensue. The attack was begun with customary fury; but, although unassisted by the crowds of bowmen who were wont to be posted on the bridge, the brave cavaliers drove back their assailants. This only prepared for them a more terrific doom. The Normans, roaring like wild beasts disappointed of their prey, dispersed themselves along the shore, and gathering together the wrecks of the bridge, heaped them round the tower, and set fire to the funeral pile.

At this instant Adele, who had remained standing on the walls, made a sudden spring; and if she had not been caught by her brother, who watched her unobserved, would have plunged into the gulf below. She was carried by main force to her own apartment, her screams smiting upon the hearts of the garrison like a voice of horror and despair. Having fallen into a stupor resembling sleep, she was speedily left alone by her women, who returned to the ramparts to gorge their *soul* appetite with the scene of death. She was awakened from her trance by a fluttering and pecking at the window, accompanied by the ringing of small bells, and, looking up, saw her own beautiful falcon—the same which she had presented to Eriland. The cavaliers in the tower, seeing the moment of their inevitable fate approach, had gene-

rously set free these companions of their pleasures,* and that of Eriland—

“Though that its jesses were his dear heart-strings,”

had been permitted to return to its mistress, in token that the owner had in the same instant parted with all earthly hope. Adèle leaped from her couch, and received the messenger with kisses and caresses.

“So, my pretty bird!” she exclaimed; “and thou art come to chide my delay! What! the company waits, and the bride-bed is decked, and all is ready but Adèle! Beshrew my heart, if I will keep them long!—What, ho! my damsels! Gadflies! they have gone to stare at the men on the valls. Well, well! if it be true, as they say, that a fair bride is easily— Ha! where are those flowers? where is the wreath for my hair? All withered—withered—withered! Well, we must do without; my tresses shall hang as Nature wove them—to my very heels, I vow! And now the rings—the gems—how my hands tremble! Oh, cold, cold! But if there be not a gallant fire at the wedding!—a fire that would serve a whole army of martyrs to ride to heaven on! Come, come, it is enough; away—away—away;” and in a robe of virgin white, cloaked with her golden hair—gems blazing on her hands and bosom, and the fever spot burning on her cheeks, the distracted maiden hastened out of the house, and glided swiftly towards the city gates.

The crowd instinctively made way for the sister of Count Odon, wild and fantastic as was her appearance, and the postern door was thrown open at her bidding. The spectators upon the ramparts, even in the midst of the scene of horror which occupied them, withdrew their eyes to gaze upon the strange apparition which was now seen gliding without the walls. Adèle stepped into a little skiff moored to the bank near where the bridge had stood, and, leaning upon an oar, pushed out into the stream. The light shallop, caught in an eddy, whirled round in the middle of the river, and all expected to see the fantastic Appearance dissolve

* Abbo, de Bell. Par. Carm.

and vanish like a bubble on the water ; but with the unconscious courage of insanity, Adèle struck her little oar into the stream, and restored its equipoise and direction to the boat, which, skimming along the surface, darted into a creek on the opposite side, formed by the wrenching out of the posts of the bridge in the storm. Then climbing over the wet and yet burning wrecks which formed the funeral pile of the cavaliers, she reached the door, now in ruins, of the wooden tower, and disappeared in the smoke and darkness within.

A few moments of suspense ensued ; and Count Odon, although struck with a terrible suspicion, did not dare to let the question escape which seemed bursting his very heart. At length the burning walls of the tower, still erect and menacing in their ruin, yielding like some stout warrior to inevitable doom, fell groaning to the earth. For some time the whole was shrouded from view by the clouds of smoke and dust which seemed to rise to the very heavens ; but in the midst a few vivid flashes of fire and steel gave fearful hint of what was going on within.

The darkness was at length swept suddenly away by a lingering breath of the storm, and the wolfish cries of the Normans sank simultaneously into silence.

The lifeless bodies of the eleven original defenders of the place strewed the bloody ashes, mangled in some instances out of the form of men ; but, leaning against the doorway which had communicated with the bridge, and where the ruins were still standing, the twelfth appeared, faint and exhausted, but still alive.* Hanging over him, a female figure of lofty stature and ravishing beauty, arrayed in a garb of fantastic splendour, which was only dimly seen through wreaths of golden hair descending to her feet, stood embracing and supporting his neck with one hand, while with the other she pointed, in a manner half-deprecatory, half-menacing, to his enemies.

The wild Normans stood aghast at an apparition which they could identify only with the Heavenly Virgin of the Christians appearing in bodily presence to save her worshipper ; but when

* Abbo, de Bell. Par. Carm. v. 552, et seq.

Adèle, whose reason had returned with the counter-shock she had undergone, was seen leading away her bewildered lover half by force and half by whispered persuasions and caresses, their fury re-awoke, and with clubs and spears they rushed over the bloody and smoking ruins, to finish the sacrifice.

The first blow struck at the lovers was warded off by the Herculean arm of one who till the moment had appeared to be the most eager of the bloodhounds ; and as the weapon shivered upon his brawny limb, the Norman giant, sweeping his club round his head, shouted to the pursuers in a voice of thunder to forbear.* Crouching back at the sound, the crowd stood amazed and irresolute for a moment ; but soon breaking into loud murmurs, they caught up stones and burning fragments of the ruins, and prepared to discharge the mortal shower upon their victims.

"Forbear!" was uttered again at the instant by a voice shriller and still more startling than that of the giant ; and the Norman priestess, rising as if from the smoking ruins, held forth the young child as a shield between the Christians and their doom. Adèle, clasping her lover still more closely, half dragged him down the uneven descent ; and followed by their protectress covering their retreat, and at a cautious distance by the whole body of the barbarous host, whose mingled shouts of wonder, rage, and superstitious terror drowned the ear and appalled the heart, she at length gained the bank. They entered the boat, and she allowed the exhausted warrior to sink upon the beams ; then, with one gesture of devoted gratitude to her preservers, one sob from her full heart, and one gush of tears from her dim eyes, she pushed out into the river, and reached the opposite shore in safety.

That very evening the long-promised succours arrived ; but instead of men and steel, they consisted of *gold*, with which the imperial caitiff bought the forbearance of the Normans !

* It may be proper to remark, that it was commonly believed in France that the armies of those redoubtable Normans were strengthened by giants. The bones of immensely tall men were found nearly two centuries ago, while digging in the Place de Valenciennes, Bruil ; and these were supposed to be the remains of the very warriors who figure in this record.

THE ADVENTURES OF ERILAND.

Charles le Gros then returned into Germany, where he became insane, and was turned out of his palace; and after subsisting for some time on the charity of Liutbast, bishop of Mayenne, he died, in 888, an object of horror and contempt. The expected dismemberment of the empire took place; and in consequence of the youth and mental imbecility of Charles, surnamed Le Simple, the only surviving scion in the male line of the race of Charlemagne, the French part of the dominions were without a master. Who could have been so worthy of such a trust as the hero who knew how to defend it with his sword? The gallant preserver of the capital was unanimously called to the throne, and the Count of Paris became the King of France.

And Eriland, the brave, the simple-hearted, the noble, the generous—what saith this chronicle further of his fate and conduct? That as the husband of a princess, and the brother and counsellor of a king, he forgot not the feelings or duties of a soldier, a lover, and a man.*

* Abbo, from whom various details of this story are taken, is cited as a competent authority by most of the historians. He was a monk of the Abbey of St. Germain, of Neustrian origin, and an eye-witness of the siege of Paris. His chronicle, written between the years 896 and 898, strung into Latin verse in the monkish fashion, is valuable for anything but its poetry. The following specimen, containing the names of the twelve heroes of the Wooden Tower, will perhaps satisfy the reader's curiosity:—

“Ermenfredus, Erivens, Erilandus, Odaucer,
Ervic, Arnoldus, Solius, Gozbertus, Uvido,
Ardradus, pariterque Eimardus, Gogsuinusque.”



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Tenth Century.

911.--In the reign of Charles the Simple, an event occurred of great importance to France, and to the cause of general civilization. The wild Northern barbarians who had so long been the scourge of the country, at length settled themselves permanently in Neustria, which thenceforth received the name of Normandy, and, under a chief who perhaps in any age would have acquired the reputation due to genius, began already to cultivate the peaceful arts. Charles, happily adopting the timid policy of his predecessors, sent overtures of friendship to the Norman prince, offering him his daughter in marriage, and inviting him to become a Christian. Rollo received both marriage and baptism without the smallest scruple, and only hesitated, while rendering the feudal homage, to kiss the king's foot. One of his officers at length performed the ceremony, in the course of which the rude barbarian seized hold of the leg, and very nearly overturned the royal person; an irreverence which, in that stage of feudality, only made the bystanders laugh.

A series of misrule having provoked the discontent of the more powerful lords, Charles was dethroned in 922, and Robert, brother of the late King Eudes, set in his place. Robert, however, is not generally included in the list of the kings of France; for, soon after, Charles killed him in battle with his own hand, and remounted the throne.

The success of the Simple was not permanent, for Hugues le Blanc, son of Robert, vanquished him in turn, and drove him from the field to take refuge with one of his subjects, where he remained for the rest of his life. Hugues himself was contented with the title of Duke of France, and permitted Raoul, Duke of Burgundy, to take that of King.

924.—The reign of this Ralph was a long war. All the world went to fight, because the Pope had made a child of five years of age an archbishop; and Ralph had the mortification to die before seeing the end of the matter (936). Hugh le Blanc put in his place Louis d'Outremer, the son of Charles the Simple, so called, because he had been brought up in England, where his mother had taken refuge. Louis, when on the throne, attempted to shake off his protector; but Hugh threw him into prison at his pleasure, and soon taught him the insignificance of a king of feudal France. At the death of Louis, the king-maker permitted his son Lothaire to reign in his stead, and, dying two years after, left his power to his own son, Hugues Capet.

954.—Lothaire, who had more spirit than might have been looked for among the dregs of this dynasty, regained a little of the lost authority over the nobles. In his reign, Lorraine, which had been for a hundred years a bone of contention between the French and German crowns, was ceded to the Emperor Otho, who did homage to Lothaire as to his *suzerain*. Lothaire, dying, was succeeded by Louis VI, who reigned one year, and was the last of the *Carlovingian* kings.

987.—At this epoch, Hugh Capet, not contented, like his father, with the amusement of making and unmaking kings, took it into his head to become one of the playthings himself, and, breaking the thread of legitimacy, began a new line of the sovereigns of France. This was not a matter of great difficulty. His own friends and vassals were numerous, and the other powerful nobles, who attached very little importance to royalty, only shrugged their shoulders, and allowed him to pursue his fancy without interruption. "Who made thee an Earl?" said he to one of his insurgent lords. "Who made thee a King?" was the reply. The King, in fact, was only an Earl with another name,—for France was in reality divided into a number of petty sovereignties. Yet it was no empty prestige that was attached to the royal title. Hugh Capet should be considered as a personification of feudality mounted on the throne; and in recording the actions of men, which are the body of history, let us not forget to observe the course and effect of political systems, where lies the soul.

The last king's uncle, as the lawful heir, had recourse to arms to assert the divine right of legitimacy; but, as yet, this principle does not seem to have been clearly understood. Men had fought eighteen years, because the Pope had chosen to make a boy an archbishop, but they would not fight on the occasion of Hugh Capet's making himself King; and the lawful claimant was taken prisoner at Laon, and died two years after.

996.—Hugh caused himself to be crowned, and *sacred* at Rheims, and, with a common precaution among persons who are desirous of entailing kingdoms upon their family, associated his son Robert with him in the government. He well knew that a nation can be accustomed to anything; and accordingly, when Hugh died, after a reign of nine years, familiarized as they had been to the sight of Robert by his father's side, he was allowed to remain where he stood, as a matter of course. Hugh was much regretted by the priests and soldiers, with both of whom he had taken care to ingratiate himself: as for the people, it was all one to them who lived or who died.

1000.—Robert, who succeeded, received the title of Pious, because he neglected the affairs of his kingdom to patronise thieves, sing psalms, and wash the sores of beggars. His reign, however, belongs chiefly to the following century.

The tenth century, at the close of which he ascended the throne, has been called the Iron Age. Plunged in ignorance and superstition, the people had no political existence whatever; and the stories of the romancers of the prowess

of their warriors, who vanquished thousands with their single arm, are by no means so devoid of foundation as is commonly imagined. A lord on horseback, armed to the teeth, was in reality an overmatch for a whole host of serfs on foot without defensive armour, dragged by force to the war, and trembling before the prestige which encompassed the brow of nobility. In the midst of this chaos, in which the will of the strong was law, controlled and overturned the next moment by the will of the stranger, arose, according to some chronologers, the institution of chivalry, one of the most powerful agents of civilization that have ever acted upon the destinies of men. Intended, as it appears to have been, and probably was in reality, only as a substitute for legitimate authority among the nobles, its effects were yet felt by all classes of the people. A taste for luxury was introduced; the skilful armourer became of consequence in the eyes of the knight who was indebted to his ingenuity: the arts received protection and encouragement; and the spirit of chivalrous honour learnt gradually to extend its circle, which at first embraced only the noble, the brave, and the fair. But Chivalry is as yet hardly perceptible; and it must advance before our eyes with the stealthy, tardy pace of time itself.



The Man-Wolf.



Oh flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified,!

SHAKSPEARE.

THE MAN-WOLF.

Je me souviens, en effet, qu' à la table du sénéchal était un seigneur qui faisait rire les convives par la manière gauche avec laquelle il maniait la fourchette et les couteaux ; mais comment me serais-je imaginé que je soupais avec un ancien loup ?—TRISTAN LE VOYAGEUR.

IT was the third day after the grand procession in honour of Saint Ursula and the other virgin martyrs,* and yet the town of Josselin was far from having returned to its wonted repose. The bells of Notre Dame du Roncier still rang out every now and then, as if forgetting that the fête was over ; crowds were seen rolling, and meeting, and breaking in the streets ; banners floated from the windows, and flowers and branches tapestried the walls. The representatives, indeed, of the eleven thousand Virgins had begun to disappear from the gaze of an equivocal worship, like the flowers at the close of summer. Every hour some glittering fragment was seen detaching itself from the mass ; and as the beautiful pensionnaire, in her litter, or on her palfrey, raised her head side-long to listen to the discourse of some wandering knight, whom

* The martyrdom of the Eleven Thousand Virgins is placed by some writers about the end of the fourth century. When Conan, say they, with eleven thousand British warriors, in the service of the Emperor Maximus (or of Constantine, Tyran.), conquered Armorica, and founded the Kingdom of Little Britain, or Brittany, the Emperor, to reward his valour, sent to demand from Dionotus, King of Cornwall, as many virgins as would suffice to wive the whole body. Dionotus, accordingly, despatched his daughter Ursula and eleven thousand of the *élite* of the British virginity in this laudable enterprise ; but the fair adventurers being cast on shore by a tempest among the Huns and Picts, and declining to receive their hands in substitution for those of their own countrymen, were mercilessly sent to heaven by the ruffians with the double crown of virginity and martyrdom. This story has puzzled every body but those of the learned society of Sorbonne, who chose Saint Ursula for their patroness. Cornwall is no doubt better peopled now than it was then ; and if it possesses to-day eleven thousand handsome and marriageable virgins, all that can be said is, that it is a great shame.

chance, or our Lady of the Bramble-bush,* had bestowed on her for an escort, she might have been observed to throw forwards into the distance a glance of fear, or at least distaste, to where the bars of her monastic cage seemed to gape for their accustomed prisoner. The ladies of the neighbourhood too and the high-born cameristes of the nobility, as they floated homewards, surrounded by the chivalry of their province, sighed heavily when the towers of the chateau of the house of Porhoet† melted away in the golden sky; and the humbler damsels of the villages, to whom a part in the procession had been accorded, from the difficulty of finding so many virgins of high rank, waved mournfully their chaplets of blue-bells in token of adieu, and as the evening drew in, looked round in terror for the wandering fires of the sotray, and the dwarfs who dance at night round the peulvan.

A sufficient number still remained, however, to give an appearance of bustle and animation to the town; and it was thought that so great a concourse had never before been known to grace the annual ceremony of ducking the fishermen,‡ which took place on the day when this history commences. The crowd which lined the river-side was immense. Ladies, knights, and squires, chate-lains of the neighbourhood, priests, bourgeois and villeins—all were jumbled together with as little distinction as it was possible for the feudal pact to sanction. Minstrels, trouvères, and jong-leurs mingled in the crowd, some singing, some striking the cymbals, and some reciting stories. Tables were spread in the midst, where savoury viands were eagerly bought by the spectators,—for it was now more than two hours since dinner, being past mid-day. Instead of tablecloths, the ancient, and economical substitute of flowers and leaves was tastefully arranged upon the

* Roncier; so denominated because her statue was found buried among brambles. This simulacrum, by the way, has been supposed to be the property of Isis, or at least of the Roman Lares and Penates.—Ogée, Dict. de Bret. The pious fraud is not uncommon; even Venus sometimes has been transubstantiated into the Holy Virgin.—Martin, Religion du Gaulois.

† Afterwards possessed by the celebrated Olivier de Clisson,

‡ Ogée, t. 2. p. 204.

board, and streams of wine and hippocras played from naked statues, in a manner which in our time would be reckoned less delicate than ingenious.

The bells at last began to ring, and the trumpets to bray ; and the judges of the place, surrounded with banners, and all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of authority, entered upon the scene. Having taken their station, a solemn proclamation was made, calling upon all the persons who had sold, during Lent, fish taken in the river, to compeer then and there, either personally or by proxy, and for the satisfaction of the lieges, and in token of fealty and submission to the lord of the fief, to throw a somerset in the said river, under pain of a fine of three livres and four sous.

A simultaneous shout arose from the multitude when the crier finished, and the air was shaken for many minutes by a burst of laughter like the neighing of a whole nation of Houyhnhnms. One by one, the fish-merchants answered to the summons ; some defying the ridicule of their situation by an air of good-humoured audacity ; some looking solemn and sulky ; and some casting a glance of marked hostility upon the turbulent and rapid waters before them. These feudal victims, generally speaking, were stout young fellows ; but a few among them were evidently quiet townsmen, who had nothing to do with the catching of the fish they had had the misfortune to sell. Two or three appeared to be the rustic retainers of gentlemen who had not scrupled to make profitable use of the river where it watered their estates, but who were altogether disinclined to do homage in their own persons ; and these locum tenentes more especially looked with extreme disgust upon an element with which they were connected neither by habit nor interest. Owing to the late rains, indeed, the stream on this day presented an appearance not very inviting to the unpractised bather. The black and swollen waters came down with a sullen turbulence, and an eddy whirling violently in the deep pool chosen for the scene of the divers' exploits, was somewhat startling to the imagination. Some were followed to the water's edge by the elder women of their families visiting and encouraging them, and others

were egged on to the adventure by the sheathed swords of their masters, who seemed to enter into the joke with great gusto, shouting and clapping their hands at every deeper plunge.

The sport at length suffered some interruption from the backwardness of a country fellow, whose master in vain endeavoured, partly by fair words and partly by punches with the hilt of his sword, to drive him into the river.

"For the love of the Virgin," said the recusant, "only look at these black and muddy waters! It was on this very spot I saw last Easter the Leader of Wolves step grimly upon the bank in the moonlight, followed by his hellish pack; and, now I think on't, if he did not look at me fixedly with his dead eye, I am no Christian man but a heathen Turk!"

"Thou shalt tell me the story again—thou shalt, indeed," said the master, a man in the prime of life, and a knight by his golden spurs; "but in with thee now, good Hugues,—in with thee, for the honour of the house! 'Tis but a step—a jump—a plunge; thou wilt float, I'll warrant thee, like a duck. Now, shut thy mouth, wink thine eyes, and leap, in the name of Saint Gildas!"*

"Saint Gildas, indeed!" said the man, "I am neither a duck nor a saint, I trow. I cannot roost upon the waters, not I, with my legs gathered up into my doublet. Were it a league to the bottom, I should down. Neither can I tuck the waves under me like a garment, and sail away in the fashion of the Abbot of Rhuys, as light as a fly in a cockleshell, singing, *Deus, in adjutorium!*"†

"Want of faith, good Hugues," returned the Knight, repressing

* Abelard was a successor of this saint in the abbacy of the monastery at Rhuys, where the pulpit of the lover of Heloise is still shown to the visitor.

† The Devil, intending to play St. Gildas a trick, sent four of his confidential spirits, disguised as monks, to beseech him to repair with them to the convent of St. Philibert, where a friend *in articulo mortis* desired to see him. The saint, although knowing well enough what lurked under the cowl, embarked with the false monks; but the party was no sooner fairly out to sea than he began to chant with a loud voice, *Deus, in adjutorium!* when the boat immediately went to pieces, the demons disappeared, and he himself was carried respectfully by the waves to land.

his vexation, "nothing save want of faith." But as the crowd began to murmur aloud, his choler awoke, and with a vigorous arm he dragged the victim to the water's edge.

"Beast that thou art!" he exclaimed, "shall the honour of the house of Keridreux be stained by a blot like thee? In with thee, rebellious cur, or I will pitch thee into the middle of the stream like a clod!"

"I will then," said the man with a gasp, "I will indeed. Holy Saints, I had ever such an aversion to water! For the love of the Virgin, just give me a push, as if by accident, for my legs feel as if they were growing from the bank. Stay—only one moment! Wait till I have shut my eyes and my mouth. I will make as if I was looking into the river, and the bystanders will think we have been discoursing of the fish." The Knight clenched his hand in a fury, as the murmurs of the crowd rose into a shout; and while Hugues was running over the names of as many saints as he could remember in so trying a moment—Notre Dame du Roncier, Saint Yves, Saint Briec, Saint Gildas—he lent him a blow that would assuredly have sent him beyond the middle of the stream, had not the victim, moved either by a presentiment of danger, or by some sudden qualm of cowardice, sprung round at the same instant, and caught, as if with a death-grip, by his master's doublet. The force which he had exerted almost sufficed of itself to overbalance the Knight, and it is no wonder, therefore, that the next moment both master and man were floundering in the river.

A rush took place to the water's edge at this novel exhibition. The bourgeois clapped their hands and shouted to the depth of their throats; the ladies screamed; and those who had handsome knights near them fainted; all was noise and confusion among the crowd.

The Knight, in the mean time, being tall, had gained a footing, although up to his neck in water; where he stood tugging at his sword, and casting round a bloodthirsty glance, resolving to sacrifice the caitiff who had so villainously compromised the dignity of the house of Keridreux, before emerging from the river. Hugues was carried out of his reach by the current, and dragged on shore

amidst the jeers of the bystanders ; and the stout Knight, as soon as he had become aware of this fact, rejecting indignantly the assistance that was offered him, climbed up on the bank, and clearing a space with a single circle of his sword, strode up to his intended victim. Another instant would have decided the fate of Hugues, who, having escaped a watery death, seemed to view with composure the perils of the land ; but a lady, breaking through the circle of spectators, stepped in between him and his master.

"A boon ! a boon ! Sir Knight," she exclaimed ; "give me the villain's life, for the honour of chivalry !" The Sire of Keridreux started back as if at the sight of a spectre ; his sword fell from his hand ; the flush of anger died on his cheek ; and he stood for some moments mute and motionless, like an apparition of the drowned.

"The boon," said he, at length recovering his self-possession, "is too worthless for thy asking. I would I had been commanded to fetch thee the head of the King of the Mohammedans, or to do some other service worthy of thy beauty, fair Beatrix, and of my loyalty !"

"Loyalty !" repeated the lady, half in scorn, half in anger. The Knight sighed heavily ; and after losing some moments in the purgatory of painful remembrance, his thoughts, reverting to the circumstances of his present situation, fixed eagerly upon the object apparently best qualified to afford them ostensible employment.

"How, dog !" he cried, striding up to the still dripping vassal, "hast thou not the grace even to thank the condescension which stoops to care for thy base and worthless life ? Down on thy knees, false cur—crouch !" and catching Hugues by the throat, he hurled him to the feet of his patroness.

"Enough, enough," said the lady ; "get thee gone, thou naughty fish-seller ; St. Gildas be thy speed, and teach thee another time to have more faith in the water, when the need of thy lord requires thee to represent the worthy person of the Sire of Keridreux !" Hugues kissed the hem of the mantle of his fair preserver, and

coasting distantly round his master, dived into the crowd and disappeared.

While with the grave pace and solemn countenance of a Breton knight, the Sire of Keridreux strode stately along in the townward direction by the side of the lady, his lank hair and dripping garments seemed to afford considerable amusement to the spectators. The bourgeois concealed their merriment only till he had passed to a distance at which it would be safe to laugh; and the nobles, partly from politeness and partly from prudence, were fain to put their gloves upon their mouths. The Knight, however, seemed to have forgotten his late disaster and present plight, in considerations of more moment. He turned his head neither to the right nor to the left, but stalked mutely and majestically along, till on arriving at the house where his fair companion resided, the bubbling sound that attended his plunging into an arm-chair recalled his wandering thoughts.

"The beast!" he muttered, "the outcast dog! To serve me such a trick, and in her presence; after I had arrayed myself in all respects befitting the dignity of the spurs, and journeyed hither on purpose to get speech of her! Beatrix," he continued aloud, and seizing hold of her hand with his wet glove, "fairest Beatrix, deign to regard with compassion the most miserable of the slaves of thy beauty!"

"Indeed I do," said Beatrix, with grave simplicity, "the weather begins now to get cold, and these wet clothes must be both unpleasant and dangerous. I think I hear the cry of 'cupping!' in the street!* allow me to persuade thee to lose a little blood." •

"An ocean, in a cause of thine!" replied the Knight, "but by a lance, fair Beatrix, not a lancet; I had ever a horror of losing blood otherwise than in a fair field."

* The physician, in these days, cried, like Wisdom, in the streets. "*Ven-uses à ventouser!*" was the burthen; cupping being then the principal business the profession.

"Then at least a draught of wine will fortify thee against the cold; and here stands a flask of the true Paris brewing, to which our wines of Brittany are mere cider."* She then decanted about a modern quart into a huge silver cup, which she presented to the Knight.

"Let it receive virtue from thy lip," said the Knight, hesitatingly, "or I shall find none."

"Nay, nay, fair Sir," replied Beatrix, "those days are past and gone. We *have* eaten, it is true, out of the same dish, and drunken out of the same cup, but what was only folly then would be sin and shame now."† The Knight raised the goblet gloomily to his mouth.

"I trust," said Beatrix, while she stooped, as if to look for something among the rushes on the floor, "I trust that the worthy Dame of Keridreux is in good health?" The Knight started at the question, and was seized with a fit of coughing which spoiled his draught.

"Confusion upon the name!" he cried, dashing the remainder of the wine upon the floor. "Would to heaven she were in the

* The wines of the environs of Paris, *mirabile dictu*, were anciently celebrated. Baccius, in his treatise *De Vitis*, printed at Rome in 1596, says that they do not yield to any in the kingdom; and a century after, Chaulieu represents the Marquis of la Fare as going to Surène and drinking so freely of them that he could not well find the door:

"Et l'on m'écrît qu'à Surène
Au cabaret, on a vu
La Fare, et le bon Silène,
Qui, pour en avoir trop bu,
Retrouvoient la porte à peine
D'un lieu qu'ils ont tant connu."

† To have only one plate and one cup at table was a mark of gallantry and good understanding between a lady and gentleman. In the old romance of *Perceforest*, in describing a feast of eight hundred knights, it is said, "Et si n'y eust celui (personne) qui n'eust une dame ou une pucelle à son écuelle." Drinking out of the same cup is still a token of love in some parts of Lower Brittany.

health I wish her ! And it is thou, cruel as thou art, and fair as thou art cruel, who hast bound me to a stake as doleful as the cross—who hast leagued me, I verily believe, with an incarnate fiend !”

“I have heard,” said Beatrix demurely, but with sparkling eyes, “that the Dame of Keridreux is of somewhat a peculiar temper ; but, for my part, I was, as I am, only a simple maiden, and no liege sovereign to give in marriage my vassals at my pleasure.”

“Oh, would thou hadst been less my liege sovereign—or more ! I loved thee, Beatrix, as a man and a soldier ; I knew nothing, not I, of the idle affectation which plays with a true servant even as an angler tickles a trout ; I received thy seeming slight as a purposed insult—and straightway went home, and married another in pure fury and despite.”

“Alas, alas !” said Beatrix, weeping, “thou wert ever of a fierce and sudden temper ! Thou knewest not of the modern fashion of noble and knightly love. Having plighted thy troth, and drunk with me of the cup of faith and unity, thou dreamedst not of aught save holy wedlock after the manner of our ancestors. It entered not into thy brain to imagine that the lays of the minstrel were to be verified in the history of private life, and that thou wert to enter into human happiness, as the soul attains to Heaven, through the portals of doubt, fear, sorrow, suffering, yea, even despair. Alack-a-day ! Peradventure I was myself to blame ; peradventure I disguised the too great softness of my heart by too stony a hardness of the face, and looked to thee, alas ! for more patience and forbearance in the conduct than there was constancy in the soul. But God’s will be done !” continued she, drying her eyes. “Time and our Lady’s benevolence will straighten all things, even the crooked temper—if crooked it be—of the Dame of Keridreux.”

“Serpent !” exclaimed the Knight bitterly, “thou knowest not what she is. Oh, if I could find but one leper spot on her body for twenty on her soul !”

"Hush ! hush !" interrupted the lady hastily, "thou forgettest that although the laws of man are silent, those of God still speak with a voice of thunder to the transgressor !"*

"But thou knowest her not," repeated the Knight. "Oh, I could tell thee what would turn thy young blood cold but to hear !"

"Then tell me," said Beatrix, "for I love to have my blood run cold."

"Alas, alas !" ejaculated the sorrowful husband, "she understands Latin !"†

"Latin ! Holy Virgin, how I pity thee ! Out on the false heart ! it could not be without a price she bought that knowledge. It was but last Easter that one of those learned dames in the neighbourhood of the convent where I board sat upon a viper's eggs, and produced a winged serpent with three heads, whose nourishment to this hour, as all men relate, is human blood." The gallant Knight grew pale at this anecdote ; but after swallowing down another goblet-full of wine at a draught, he hemmed stoutly, and again seizing the hand of his sometime love—

"Beatrix," said he suddenly, "I am weary of my life ; I have come to the determination of abandoning my inheritance, and passing over into Italy. Fly with me ! I will either beg or buy a dispensation from the Pope, and make thee my wife in Rome." Beatrix opened her eyes in astonishment mingled with horror. Turning away her head in aversion, she looked towards the window. The shades of evening were beginning to fall, and at

* The new and terrible disease of leprosy was held to form a proper reason for divorce, although this was not sanctioned by any express law.

† Women who understood Latin were held in especial horror by the Bretons ; and many stories such as that which follows were told to account for or excuse the feeling. Female learning has in all ages been hated by male ignorance. The classification in the following stanza is odd :

"La femme qui parle Latin,
L'enfant qui est nourri de vin,
Soleil qui luiserne au matin,
Ne vient point à bonne fin."

PIERRE GROSNET.

the moment the distant howl of a wolf in the neighbouring forest struck upon her ear. The maiden shuddered at the ominous sound. Spitting in sign of abhorrence,* while she crossed herself devoutly—

“Alas!” she exclaimed, “unhappy wretch! knowest thou not that in Italy—aye, even in Spain, or England, thou wouldst still be under the jurisdiction of the laws of Heaven? Are we not assured that such transgressor shuts upon himself the gates of Paradise—and with a wife like thine, couldst thou expect them to re-open? Would the vixen Dame of Keridreux, beseeching the permission of Saint Peter, come to thee at thy cry, and exclaim through the bars, ‘I forgive thee!’”† The Knight groaned, and applied again to the wine-goblet.

“Art thou not afraid,” resumed the lady, “to go home to thy lonely abode, and at so late an hour, with a mortal sin in thy thoughts? Perchance the howl of that prowling wolf was an omen sent by Our Lady herself to warn thee; and now, while I recall it—holy saints—methought the voice sounded like thine own!”

“Saint Yves and Saint Briec!” cried the Knight, starting suddenly upon his legs. “Thou dost not mean it! No longer ago than last night I dreamed that I was myself transformed into a loup-garou; and at Easter the misbegotten cur who dragged me to-day into the river, saw with his own eyes the Leader of Wolves coming out of the very pool where I plunged!”‡

Beatrice changed colour at this intelligence, and as the room became darker and darker, began to wish her unhallowed lover away.

* The usual token of the times.

† The formula of admission for naughty husbands.—*Evangel des Connoles*, p. 101.

‡ The superstition of the loup-garou held the sinners of Brittany in awe for a considerable time. The guilty found themselves transformed into wolves for a space short or long, in proportion to the magnitude of the offence; but it is said that, in process of years, men became so audacious, that some individuals sought, from an odd and vicious taste, the metamorphoses which their fathers had endured as a punishment. The Leader mentioned was an apparition of a grim, lank personage, followed by a string of spectre wolves.

"Repent," said she, "repent while there is yet time; I will myself beseech Our Lady du Roncier in thy behalf. Good-night, good-night—and Heaven hold thee from turning a loup-garou!" The Knight, true to the Breton custom, having first ascertained that there was no more wine in the jar,* made his obeisance with a heavy sigh, and left the house without uttering another word.

His conversation with Beatrix having been greatly fuller than it has been thought necessary to report, it was now late in the evening, being past eight o'clock. The streets were deserted and the houses shut up; and most of the inhabitants, having supped two hours ago, were beginning to think of retiring to bed.† On emerging from the dark and lonely street, where the rows of tall houses inclined their heads to each other in gossip fashion, the Knight, with unsteady step, and head bewildered both by love and wine, took the way to the bridge. While walking cautiously over the creaking planks, a hum of distant voices rose upon his ear, and presently a small solitary light appeared dancing wildly upon the troubled waters. He stood still in awe and curiosity, till at length the light was suddenly extinguished and the voices ceased; and muttering a prayer for the drowned, whose corpse was thus sought for and miraculously pointed out, he resumed his journey.‡

The shades of evening fell more thickly around every moment, and the Sire began to regret his bootless journey, and to look sharply about at the solitary tree or tall stone which stood here and there with an unpleasant perpendicularity near the road-side.

* The Low Bretons, in their quality, no doubt, of descendants of the Celts, are said to have been a grave, melancholy race, much addicted to drinking, fanciful, and superstitious.

† "Lever à six, diner à dix,
Souper à six, coucher à dix,
Fait vivre l'homme dix fois dix."

OLD PROVERBS.

‡ When the body of a drowned person could not readily be found, a candle was stuck into a loaf, and sent adrift upon the water. The light, of course, put itself out at the proper spot.

In these days trees and stones were not the only objects of curiosity which presented themselves to the gaze of the night traveller. Men, housed in their towers, and castles, and cottages, were accustomed piously to leave the kingdom of literal darkness to those whom it more concerned ; and when accident compelled some luckless wayfarer to encroach upon forbidden hours, he looked upon himself as an intruder where he had no business, and where he was exceedingly likely to meet with the chastisement he deserved. Like most persons in a similar situation, the Knight experienced a marvellous increase in piety as he went along. He repeated an *Ave* at every step ; and on arriving at the different confluences of little village paths, where crosses were raised to serve as direction-posts to the dead who might be disposed to revisit their relations,* he stood still, and prayed aloud, with perfect sincerity, for the repose of their souls.

Farther on, having reached a stream which, leaping out of a wood, crossed the road, he paused in doubt as to the depth ; for, in truth, his brain was somewhat confused with the wine he had drunk. On raising his head, he was startled to see a lady standing among the trees at the water's edge. She was dressed in white, and, as well as he could distinguish, very elegantly formed ; but her face was concealed from him, as she bent over the stream busily engaged in wringing a garment which she had apparently just washed. An unpleasant sensation swept across the mind of the Sire of Keri-dreux ; and although a man of distinguished courage, and devotedly attached to the fair sex (for all his wife belonged to it), he plunged suddenly knee-deep into the water, and made for the opposite bank.

Attracted by the sound, the lady raised her head.

"Sir Knight," she exclaimed, in a voice of touching sweetness—"tarry, I pray thee, for the love of honour, and help me to wring this garment, which is all too heavy for my slender fingers !" The Knight, half alarmed and half ashamed, turned back, and leap-

* Thiers, *Traité de Superst.* t. i. p. 71.

ing into the wood, seized hold of the dripping garment which she presented to him. He twisted to the right; but the lady was twisting the same way.

"We are wrong," said she with good-humour. The Knight twisted to the left, but his companion had at the same moment changed also. She laughed. The Knight tried again, but with the same effect—again—and again; and as at last he perceived with whom he had to deal, his hair bristled upon his head, and cold drops of sweat trickled down his brow. But still he continued the bootless labour, twisting, straining, praying, and perspiring, till at length the garment fell into the water, and danced away like a bubble on the stream; and the false washerwoman, breaking into shrieks of wild laughter, disappeared among the trees.*

The Knight made but one leap across the river, and, regaining the firm road, recommenced his journey with as much speed as could well be exerted by legs which would not be said to run. His brain, unsettled before, was turned completely topsy-turvy by this adventure; the air was thick with shadows; his ears were filled with strange voices; and at length, as the substantial howl of a wolf arose from the neighbouring thicket, it was echoed by a cry as wild and dismal from his own lips. His dream of the loup-garou—the warning of Beatrix—the horrible similarity she had detected in the voices of the wolf and the man—all rushed upon his heart like a deluge.

At the instant, a sound resembling a human cry floated upon the sluggish wind; it approached nearer and nearer, seeming one moment a shout of menace, the next a call for aid, and the next a moan of agony. Sometimes it appeared to melt away in the distance, and sometimes the heart of the traveller died within him as it crept close to his very heels. In vain he tugged with unstrung

* This lady was no doubt one of that unearthly sisterhood known to the Bretons by the name of the "*Laveuses de Nuit*." Had the Knight refused to wring with her, he would have fared much worse; and if he had only thought of looking about the spot when the task was ended, it is not improbable that he would have found the drops which fell from the garment metamorphosed into pearls and other precious stones.

fingers at his sword—in vain he essayed to produce one pious ejaculation from his dry lips ; and at length, fairly subdued by the horrors of his situation, he betook himself to open flight.

The voice of the Crieuses de Nuit pursued him*—his brain began to wander. His rapid steps sounded to his ears like the galloping of a four-footed animal : he rubbed his sleeve upon his face, and was convinced for the moment that he wore a coat of fur, forgetting that his own beard produced the peculiarity of friction : but at length, somewhat relieved by the rattling of his sword and the jingling of his spurs, he thanked Our Lady du Roncier that he was still no loup-garou.

The night in the meantime was getting darker and darker ; the road where it crossed a plain became less distinguishable from the bare and level soil at the sides ; and at length the traveller, deviating by little and little, lost the track altogether. Still, however, he continued to run on, for in mortal fear one cares not about the whither, contented with escape, even if it should be to a worse danger. And so it happened with the Sire of Keridreux ; for in flying from what, after all, was but perhaps a mere sound—*vox, et præterea nihil*—he stumbled upon a substantial misadventure.

On diving down a sudden declivity, with even more velocity than he had calculated on, he found himself all at once in the midst of at least a dozen men, dressed from head to foot in white robes. The abrupt visitor paused in astonishment and dismay, as a shout of welcome rang in his ears.

" Hail, Sire of Keridreux !" cried one.

" Hail, husband, of the dame who understands Latin !" another.

" Hail, guilty lover of Beatrix !" a third.

" Hail, magnanimous ducker in the fisherman's well !" a fourth, and so on, till the whole had spoken ; each speaker, when he had finished, whirling swiftly round on one foot like a vaulter at a merry-meeting. When every man had thus given his welcome, the strange group continued their revolutions in silence for some

* Cousins of the Laveuses de Nuit.

minutes, their white garments floating round them like vapour agitated by the wind. They at length stopped suddenly, and shouted with one voice, "Hail, LOUP-GAROU!" and presently there began so surprising a din of baying and howling, that a whole forest of wolves could not have produced the like.

The Knight listened at first in terror, but by degrees he began to howl himself, as if in emulation. The louder he howled, however, the louder rose the voices of his companions; and he threw away his head-gear, and spread back his beard to give his voice play. Thus, by degrees, he tore off his clothes, piece by piece, till at last he found himself howling *in cuerpo*. His comrades then caught him by the hand, and joined hands also with one another, they formed a ring, and began to dance round a great stone standing on end in the midst. Round and round danced the trees, and the rocks, and the hills, and the whole world, in the eyes of the Knight; and to his stunned ears, every stone had a voice, every leaf and clod its individual howl. Round flew the dancers—faster, and faster, and faster; till the Sire of Keridreux sank gasping upon the ground, and the White Men, springing into the air with a "whirr!" disappeared from his sight.*

When his recollection returned, he found himself lying upon the same spot, stark naked. It was now daylight, and he heard the sunrise horn sounding from a watch-tower in the neighbourhood. Gathering himself up, stiff, bruised, and exhausted, he looked round, and discovered with no small satisfaction that he stood upon his own ground. The castle of Keridreux was close at hand, and the scene of his adventure was the corner of a belt of wood which on one side protected the fortress. Having collected his scattered garments, he dressed as well as he could, and went straight home.

The Dame of Keridreux was in bed when her lord arrived, and as he entered the apartment, she raised herself on her elbow, and prepared, with eyes glowing like two live coals, to discharge upon

* These gentry were the Hommes Blancs, of the same family as the Laveuses and Crieuses de Nuit.

his devoted head the wrath she had been nursing for him the whole night. There was something, however, peculiar in his appearance this morning. In his jaded and haggard air she could discern few of the accusing witnesses of debauchery she had so often produced against him; and his scared look, she saw at a glance, was wholly unconnected with conjugal awe. The lady, therefore, suffered her husband to undress without a single remark, and to throw himself into bed, at an hour when more sprightly spouses were sallying forth to the chase.

Altering her usual plan of operations, she crept close to where he lay, and, throwing her arm around him, heaved a deep sigh. The Knight sprang with a suppressed oath from her embrace, and took refuge in a more distant part of the bed; a thing which it was not difficult to do at a period when such articles of household furniture were usually twelve feet long, and of a proportionate breadth.*

"Alas!" sighed the lady, in a tender tone, "how dreary are the hours of night that are passed in the absence of a beloved husband!" The Knight groaned.

"Where hast thou been, thou runaway?" continued she; "where hast thou been, my baron?"†

"I have been," said the Knight—"Oh!" and he groaned again.

"Alack-a-day!" sighed the Dame once more. "I slept not a wink the live-long night. I feared that some mischance had befallen thee; and the wolves in the forest kept such a howling——"

"It was I who howled!" said the Knight suddenly.

"Thou! nay, now thou art mocking me; the merry wine still dances in thy brain—thou who howled!"

"By the holy Virgin!" said the Knight, "it was none other than my comrades and I!"

* In the cottages the whole family slept in the same bed; and this, it would seem, from the enormous size of the beds, must at one time have been the custom even among the higher classes.

† A common title given by ladies to their lords.—*Le Grand d'Aussi*, t. 1, p. 330

"Thou art mad to say it; thou art deeper in the wine-cups than I thought. Where hast thou been?" continued she sharply; "where wert thou all night?"

"I was dancing in the wood," said the Knight, sleepily and sulkily; "and I howled"—yawning.

"Why didst thou howl?" inquired the lady, with fierce curiosity.

"I howled because I was a wolf, and could not choose!"

"O ho!" said she, as the Knight dropped asleep. "O ho!" Then stirring him gently, and placing her lips to his ear—

"What part of the wood," she whispered, "my own baron?"

"At the corner," replied the half unconscious Knight, "where stands the great stone; cursed be its gener—a—ti—on!" and he slept aloud.

The day was far advanced before the Sire of Keridreux awoke. He found, as usual, at his bedside his vassal Hugues; who indeed, besides his numerous other capacities, was a sort of body squire or feudal valet (in the modern sense of the word), and superintended more particularly the dress and toilet of his master. Hugues on this occasion had much of the air of one of the class of quadrupeds we have mentioned, when his tail, technically speaking, is between his legs; he stood edgeways to his master, with his face in such a position as to give him the advantage of eyeing with equal perspicuousness the lord on the one hand and the open door on the other, while his feet were so planted upon the rushes that at a word or a look he could have vanished in the manner vulgarly called "a bolt."

The Knight, however, seemed to have been sweated out of his Celtic irascibility; for, although conscious that to the villainous trick of his dependant he owed all his misfortunes, he turned upon him a look more in sorrow than in anger.

"Alas!" said he, with a heavy sigh, "that he who has eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup, with all his uncles and grandmothers before him, should at last have served me so unrighteous a turn!"

"I could not help it," replied Hugues, whimpering, yet deriving courage from the placid grief of his master; "St. Gildas is my

judge, I could not help it! Yet what, my master! it was but a ducking at the best; only fancy it rain water, and it will be dry before thou hast time to take off thy morning's draught."

"Out on thee, false knave!" said the Knight; "thinkest thou I care for a wet doublet? It was not the water alas! but the wine——"

"Holy Saints! and what have I to do with that?" ejaculated Hugues. "If it was not water—ay, and right foul and muddy water too—that thou and I played our gambols in, may I never taste another drop of wine in my life!"

"It was the wine, Hugues, and yet it was the water; for thou shalt know that a superabundance of the one can only be cured by a like quantity of the other. And yet, alas! it was not the wine, but the lateness of the hour; although this being the consequence of the lapse of time, and that of the action of drinking, which again was caused by water, thou, beast that thou art! art at the bottom of all. Well, well, what is past and gone may not now be helped; it behoves a wise man to enjoy the present and prepare for the future: hand me therefore my morning's draught, and let us consider of what is to be done; for I vow and protest that I do perspire from my very inmost marrow at the thoughts of the approaching night!" The Sire then raising himself up in bed, with the assistance of Hugues, applied to his lips, at short intervals, a capacious silver flagon filled with hippocras, and between whiles narrated at full length to the confidant the story of his mishaps.

In the consultation which followed, it was determined that Hugues should start off incontinent on a fleet steed with a letter to Father Etienne of Ploërmel, the Knight's confessor, imploring his immediate presence at the Castle of Keridreux; and it was fondly hoped that, by virtue of the prayers and anathemas of the holy man, the evil hour of twilight, when the Sire might otherwise expect to be driven forth to resume the nightly character of a loup-garou, would pass over in peace.

"Hie thee away, good Hugues; hie thee away!" said the Knight; "*ride for life and death, if thou lovest me; and as the*

holy monk is somewhat of the slowest in equestrian matters, even fix a pillion to thy own horse, and fetch him hither behind thee."

It was not the custom of the Dame of Keridreux to permit egress from the castle without knowing all the whys and wherefores of the matter; and Hugues, who had been trained to turn and double like a hare in such cases, hesitated as to the plan he should adopt to smuggle himself out. Recollecting, however, that in whatever manner he might manage for himself, it would be difficult to compel his steed to crawl upon knees and haunches, or even to repress the joyful neigh with which he was wont to enter upon a journey; and, moreover, bethinking himself that, in reality, there was nothing detrimental to the power and dignity of the Dame in her husband's desiring to see his confessor in circumstances so critical, he went boldly to the stable and saddled his horse, only taking care to conceal the pillion with an old cloak, for fear of raising the devil in the jealous mind of his mistress.

"And whither away, good Hugues?" asked the lady, popping in her head just at the moment when man and horse were about to dart from the stable. "Whither away so fast, and whither away so late?"

"To Ploërmel," answered Hugues, "with the permission of God."

"And thine errand, if it be not a secret?"

"To order a mass to be said for the deliverance of my master from the power of evil spirits."

"A right holy errand! Our Lady speed thee, amen!"

"Amen!" repeated Hugues; and scarcely conscious that he had told a lie, so much was he in the habit of that figure of speech when in conversation with the Dame, he was in the act of clapping his heels to his horse's sides.

"Stay!" said the lady. "I bethink me that I have here a memorandum for my own confessor at Ploërmel; and truly it is the duty of a good wife to seek assistance from Holy Church in circumstances so strange and trying. Deliver this with commendations to Father Bonaventure; thou wilt distinguish it from thy master's, if he have given a written order for the mass, by its want

both of seal and address ; for the thoughts of the innocent require no protection from the curiosity either of men or spirits."

When Hugues, who loved a good gallop with all his heart, arrived at the oak of *Mi-voie*, he bethought himself of his despatches, and slackening his pace, pulled them forth from his breast, to assure himself of their safety.

"This is my lady's," thought he ; "for although I cannot read a single letter, yet I have learning enough to know that here there is neither seal nor address ; while the other—Holy Mary ! what hath come to pass?" and, turning it round in consternation, he discovered that the second letter was in precisely the same predicament. The Knight, in his anxiety and confusion, had forgotten the customary forms ; and the two letters, to the unpractised eyes of Hugues, were as undistinguishable as two peas. Although sorely afraid, however, of the consequences of a blunder, where the vixen Dame of *Keridreux* was concerned, he determined stoutly to be in the right on his master's side, and to try Father *Etienne* with both, should the first prove to be the wrong one. Fortifying himself with this resolution, he resumed his gallop, and speedily came within sight of the town of *Ploërmel*.

The avenues to this town were nothing more than the tracks from the neighbouring huts and castles ; no great road appeared in its vicinity, like an artery, spreading wealth abroad into its dependencies ; and no navigable river or canal supplied the want of a highway on *terra firma*. For this reason *Ploërmel*, although a considerable place, had something singularly melancholy and solitary in its aspect ; the houses, too, were old and black ; and the convent, now visible on the brow of a hill, seemed to guard with sullen austerity the strange quiet of the scene.* Hugues crossed himself mechanically as he entered the town, and mentally re-

* Two centuries later, a magnificent convent of Carmelites was founded on the same site by John II. Count of *Richemond*. The cloister was composed of seventy-two vaults, and in the middle there was a well of limpid water, surmounted by a beautiful dove-cote. This edifice was destroyed in the wars of the League.

solved that nothing short of sorcery should detain him beyond sunset within its precincts.

Father Etienne was a precise and somewhat sour-looking elderly man, and Hugues was rejoiced to find, on delivery of the letter, that he had committed no mistake. The priest's countenance expressed both the grief and surprise that were natural on such an occasion; and after a moment's deliberation he told the messenger that he should be able to accompany him to Keridreux in a few minutes. He then retired to read over again without witnesses the singular epistle he had received, which ran as follows:

"I fear thy ingratitude for my preference; yet, nevertheless, I would confer with thee in private this evening on matters which may concern us both. My husband, it seems, is translated into a loup-garou! I would inquire whether there be not force enough in thy prayers to restore him to his human form, and deprive him of the power of getting into mischief again. If thou understand me not, stay where thou art; but if thou be what I take thee for, and would fain find thee, come to me in the dusk, ascend the private stair, for fear of interruption, and I will meet thee in the closet."

"Oh, woman, woman!" exclaimed the priest; "and will nothing less than a monk content thee? and a monk of my standing in the convent, and of my sanctity of character? But, nevertheless, I will go—yea, I will attend the rendezvous, and inquire into the real situation of my poor son in the spirit, the Knight of Keridreux. Peradventure the Dame will not offer violence; but if she does, I will struggle in prayer and invocation,—no saint will I leave unsummoned, and no martyred virgin unsolicited. But in the meantime, it is necessary to beware of Brother Bonaventure, the Dame's former confessor, whose eyes, as sharp at all times as those of a lynx, will now be made ten times more so by jealousy and wounded vanity. Let me first see that the coast is clear, and then steal out to—what may betide."

Father Bonaventure, to whom Hugues delivered the other letter, was a sleek, plump, oily monk of thirty-five, with an ap-

pearance of great good humour in his countenance, belied at second sight by a sinister cast in one eye.

"Hum!" said he, reading the epistle of the afflicted Knight; "this is well; the influence of the Dame must have gone far indeed, when the Sire of Keridreux sends to *me* for a shrift or a benison! But can there be no blunder? Hark thee, fellow, from whom hadst thou this letter?"

"From the Dame of Keridreux."

"Right, right; why, this is as it should be; but as for the loup-garou and the midnight howling— Hark thee again, fellow, how didst thou leave thy master?"

"Queerish, may it please your holiness; a little queerish."

"Drunk. I thought so. I'faith, she is a clever woman, that Dame of Keridreux. To make her very husband send for me! But we must have a care of Brother Etienne, the Knight's confessor; the rogue half suspects me already; and when he knows that I have supplanted him with the husband, there will be no keeping his jealous eyes from my affair with the wife. In the meantime, let us see that the coast is clear, and then hie we to inquire into the malady of our loup-garou."

Hugues, being at length dismissed by Father Bonaventure, ran anxiously to Father Etienne, to entreat him to mount and away; but the latter, encountering his brother monk on his road to the stable door, where the horse waited, pretended to have forgotten something, and hastily re-entered the convent. As for Father Bonaventure, he started back with the same confusion, and from the same cause, so that neither perceived the perplexity of the other; and thus the two rivals kept playing at bo-peep till Hugues was ready to tear his beard for very vexation. The sun at length set, and the warder's horn, sounding from tower to tower, struck upon the heart of the faithful squire like a voice of despair.

"A curse on that monk," cried he, "and on all his grandfathers! Does he mean to transport the relics of the convent, one by one, to our castle, that he thus goes and comes, and fetches and carries, without beginning or end? My poor master will be out in the forest, and stripped to the buff, long before we

reach Keridreux ; and at every howl we hear on that lonely road, I am sure my heart will leap higher in my mouth than it did when I plunged head foremost into the fisherman's well."

Father Etienne, at this moment, approached to within a single pace of the expectant horse ; and while he stopped to look cautiously about him, Hugues, at the last grain of patience, and in the fear of his life that the monk meant to turn tail again, whipped him up in his arms, and, clapping him upon the saddle, sprang himself upon the pillion behind, and made off with his prize at full gallop. The terrified ecclesiastic, seizing fast hold of the horse's mane with one hand, and of Hugues' uncombed beard with the other, kept his seat with admirable firmness, the motion of the animal jolting out sometimes a prayer and sometimes a curse, as they happened to come uppermost ; while the venturesome squire, looking pertinaciously to the quarter of their destination, already beginning to be covered with the shades of evening, and laying it stoutly into the horse with whip, spur, and tongue all at one moment, had no time to think of the sacrilege he committed in stealing a churchman.

In the meantime, Father Bonaventure, perceiving the absence of his rival, although without imagining the cause, led his own palfrey in an instant out of the stable, and leaping nimbly on his back, scoured off in the same direction. The first monk no sooner observed the pursuit, than, in the confused consciousness of intended secrecy, and perhaps of not overly virtuous intention, he uttered a cry of alarm ; and, forgetting his dread of equestrian exercises, began to belabour the beast with his heels, and shower upon him the verbal insults which all over the world have so powerful an effect on the exertions of the sensitive and intelligent horse. Hugues, terrified at this exhibition of terror, did not dare to look round for the cause, but gripped the monk still closer in his arms, and whipped, and spurred, and prayed with all his might ; while Father Bonaventure, seeing a double-loaded steed maintain the *pas* so bravely, began to fear that his own nag was only trifling with him, and putting heel, and whip, and voice into furious requisition, dashed helter-skelter, neck-or-nothing, after.

On went the horsemen as if a whole legion of devils were at their heels, and it would have been an even bet which should gain the race, had not Father Bonaventure's palfrey suddenly stumbled in leaping a ditch. When Father Etienne saw his pursuer disappear all at once from the face of the earth, he was struck dumb with amazement; but soon attributing the appearance to what seemed its probable cause, he wiped the sweat from his brow, and anathematized the phantom horseman with the bitterest curses of the Church.

In a few minutes more he was set down at his destination; and Hugues, without even waiting to receive a blessing for his safe conduct, dragged his horse abruptly and sulkily to the stable, swearing to himself, by every saint he could remember, that he would never ride double with a priest again in his life.

Although it was only dusk out of doors, when Father Etienne gained the secret stair he found himself in utter darkness. He had not groped his way long, however, till he heard a "Hist!" sounding along the corridor; and presently the Dame of Keridreux, encountering his hand, very unceremoniously threw her arm round his neck.

"And at last, my ghostly father!" said she, in a whisper. "What, in the name of all the devils, has detained thee? Another moment would have ruined all; for out of very madness I would either have sworn a conspiracy against thee to the Knight, or poniarded myself where I stood here, by turns shivering and burning, in this cold, dark corridor."

Father Etienne blessed himself secretly that he was as yet only on the threshold of an intrigue with such a firebrand; and feeling his heart beat strongly, nay, almost audibly, with virtuous resolution, he began to cast about for some means of edging himself out of the adventure.

"Thou knowest," continued the dame, with a sort of chuckle which made her confidant's blood run cold, "that the only way to deprive a loup-garou of the faculty of resuming his human shape in the morning, is to take away the clothes which he strips off on

his conversion into a wolf.* Ha ! ha ! I cannot choose but laugh to think of my dear baron coming smelling, and smelling in vain, for his doublet. How he would glare and snort—ha ! ha !—and howl—hoo-oo-oo !” Father Etienne’s hair stood on end as the malicious Dame, with impressible gaiety, began to howl in imitation of a wolf ; nor was his horror lessened when, shortly after, a sound resembling an echo appeared to come from the direction of the Knight’s chamber.

“As I live,” cried the lady, “he is at it already ! Now will he forth presently into the wood to turn a loup-garou ; and what we have to do must be done at once. Stay where thou art ; stir not ; speak not for thy life, till I come again !” and the Dame glided along the corridor towards the chamber of her lord.

Father Etienne was no sooner left alone than, throwing himself upon his hands and knees, for fear of doing himself a mischief upon the steep dark stairs, he crept down like a cat, and with stealthy pace betook himself to the stable, determined to saddle the first horse he could lay hands upon, and ride full speed home to his convent, were it at the hazard of a hundred necks. It was now, however, quite dark ; and although he could hear the panting of a steed, there was either no saddle in the stable, or it was hung out of his reach. In this predicament he lay down upon the straw, and waited in great agitation for the coming of some of the servants. A considerable time elapsed, and the meditations of

* *Tristan le Voyageur.* This agreeable traveller tells a story of a certain lord translated into a loup-garou, whose wife’s gallant steals his clothes. The unhappy wolf wanders for many days through the forest, till meeting accidentally the Duke when hunting, he forgets his present plight, makes a very gentlemanly obeisance, and falls into the line of courtiers. He is carried to the palace as a prodigy, caressing and caressed by all ; till seeing his base supplanter enter the room, he suddenly springs at his throat, and is with difficulty prevented from tearing him to pieces. Whereupon the wife and the gallant are *arrested*, confess their misdeeds, and restore the clothes ; and the loup-garou becomes a man again. The motto alludes to this story. As for the apparently trifling circumstance of dress making all the difference between a wolf and a lord of those times, thereby hangs a *tail*, or a sequence, which might be twisted into a pretty moral.

the holy man became more confused every moment ; till at length Hugues, bearing in one hand a lantern, and with the other dragging a large bundle, made his appearance at the stable-door.

"Oh Heavens!" said he, holding up his lantern, "and is it thou, after all? Well, I thought my lady must have been wrong when she talked of a monk and his palfrey, for here be no monks but thou, and no palfreys but my own precious Dapple."

"I pray thee, son," said the Father, "tell me no more of thy lady, but take me incontinent to the place thou broughtest me from, if thou settest aught of value on the prayers of a wretched but holy monk."

"Well, did ever mortal hear the like! I take thee, quotha! May the great dev—— No matter. At an hour like this, and my master just turning a loup-garou, and after thou thyself, monk though thou be, didst nothing but screech and sweat with fear all the way hither, although the darkness was no more to be compared to this than heaven is to hell! I take thee! I will see thee—— Nay, I say nothing; there is my precious Dapple, whom I love as my own soul; take him, he is thine for this night. Mount, mount, and be thankful, since thou wilt travel at such untimely hours; and if thou dost not pray heartily for the lender, monk though thou be, thou wilt surely go to—Ploermel by some worse conveyance! There, thou sittest like a knight! On with thee, in the name of St. Gildas!"

The monk having suffered Hugues, without expostulation, to perch him upon the horse, and fasten the bundle—although wherefore he was too down-hearted to take the trouble of asking—behind him, set forth upon his dreary road with no other sign of farewell than a heavy sigh.

While wayfaring gently along, with the perfect concurrence of Dapple, on whose spirits the late race had had a sedative effect, his thoughts were busy with the circumstances of this strange journey. It was evident that some traitorous design was on foot against the Knight. Who were the conspirators? Why, the Dame of Keridreux and he himself, Father Etienne! His presence at the castle on the fatal night, if fatal it was to be, could be

proved ; he had met the lady by special appointment in secrecy and darkness, and she had imparted her evil intentions without a word of disapprobation on his part. Thus it appeared that his own safety was inextricably wound up with that of the lady ; and the monk cursed from the bottom of his bowels the unlucky stars which had made him a party perhaps to a murder, or at least to the impiety of condemning an unfortunate gentleman to the forest for life, in the capacity of a wolf.

He arrived at the convent without further adventure ; but, when unsaddling the horse, was surprised to observe the bundle, which, in the confusion of his mind, he had taken for a pillion. He carried it notwithstanding to his cell, telling the porter, in reply to his questions, that it contained a cloak and other habits he had received as a gift. Unfortunate falsehood—as true as any truth he could have told ! It was in reality the cloak and other every-day habits of the Knight of Keridreux ! The monk, thunder-struck at this new calamity, gazed upon the articles in silence. He felt all the horrors of actual guilt, and all the contrition of sincere repentance ; he looked upon himself as a convicted criminal in the eyes of God and man, and upon the hose and doublet before him as the true corpus delicti of his villany.

“Cursed be the minute in which I was born,” cried he, “and the year and the day thereof ! Cursed be the steed that bore me on its back on that nefarious errand ! And may its master who seized me even as a prisoner, in the snares of hell never see salvation ! What misery is this that has come upon me ? Cannot people sin without my sanction ? If they imagine treason, am I to be drawn into holes and corners to hatch it ? If they murder, can nobody else be found to sharpen the dagger ? And if they turn their husbands into beasts, is it still I who must hide the old doublet ? Begone, evidences of guilt and snares of perdition ! I spurn ye, filthy rags of unrighteousness ! yea, I spurn ye with my foot !” And in a frenzy of rage and fear he kicked the old clothes about the room, buffeting his breast and tearing handfuls of hair from his beard.

The next morning, he saw Father Bonaventure at matins as

usual, looking as if nothing had happened ; and his choler re-awoke, as he considered that all the misfortunes of the previous night ought to have fallen by right to him.

"Plague on the wavering fancies of women !" thought he ; "of all the days in the year, what made her send for me at that identical time ? And I—I would supplant thee ! Ah, rogue, I supplanted thee in good season, if thou but knewest it. From the gallop and the embrace down to the old doublet, all should else have been thine—all—all—with a murrain to thee !"

But when the reports, as yet vague and mysterious, at length reached the convent of the misfortune which had befallen the Sire of Keridreux, the unhappy monk was ready to go wild with apprehension. In a few hours more it was known that the Knight, for his sins, had been converted into a loup-garou, and that the anxious search instituted by the distracted wife—if we should not rather say widow—had hitherto been productive of no clue, either to the man, or to what were of as much importance in such cases, his clothes.

"I will not stand this !" cried Father Etienne, leaping from the bed where he had thrown himself in a fever. "I will not carry off, in a single evening's confessorship, what Brother Bonaventure so richly deserves by the labours of a whole year ! By the Holy Virgin, he shall have the old clothes, if I die for it !" and in pursuance of this resolution, the very same evening, he conveyed secretly into his friend's cell the mysterious bundle.

When Father Bonaventure discovered the present, he had not the remotest idea of the real quarter from whence it had come. The Dame, on finding her priest absent from the spot where she had directed him to wait, being too far advanced in the business to recede, had sent the bundle by Hugues, merely commanding him to "fix it on the monk's palfrey ;" and meeting Father Bonaventure soon after ascending the stairs, the two proceeded to the execution of their plan without explanation, and without being the least aware that a second monk was in the house. On the present occasion, Father Bonaventure, without thinking of any intermediate channel, set down the gift at once as coming from the lady direct :

whose fears he imagined, when the reports and surmises began to buzz, had compelled her thus to get rid of the proofs of their mutual guilt.

"Nay, nay," said he; "I will not put up with this. She might have burned them, if she had chosen; she who has opportunity for such things; and there would have been an end. But to send them to me! Why, what can a monk do with the old clothes of a knight? By my faith, I will not be put upon by any dame of them all! She has as good a right to any risk that is going as I; and they shall e'en find their way back as they came, and let her do with them as she lists."

Hugues, who ever since daybreak had ridden from convent to convent, like one distracted, alarming the enemies of the devil with news of his triumph, and entreating their spiritual aid, arrived at this moment at the religious house of Ploërmel, and presented a fair opportunity to Father Bonaventure to get rid of his bundle. The dependant was easily persuaded to take charge of the precious deposit, which our priest desired him to deliver into the hands of the Dame of Keridreux; and being assured that the ghostly efforts of the monks should be devoted to the cause of his master, he turned his horse's head towards the castle, and began to jog homewards in a melancholy and meditative trot.

He had not journeyed far, ruminating sadly on the transactions of the last two days, when his eye was caught by a projecting corner of the bundle, which was strapped to the rear of his horse. He had not before bestowed much attention on the charge thus committed to his care, nor indeed on the instructions of the monk regarding it; but at this moment some dim associations were suggested to his mind, which gradually led his thoughts to the bundle he had fixed on the same place the night before by command of his mistress. The more he gazed, the more his suspicions of its identity were confirmed, and at last, unable to resist the suggestions of that devil (or angel, as it happens) curiosity, he undid the fastenings, and drawing the huge pillion to the front, opened it out. His emotions on discovering the lost suit of his master may be conceived. At first he merely tied it up again,

and applying whip and spur with all his might, set forth at headlong speed towards the castle ; but in a few moments, as some sudden thought occurred to him, he pulled in the reins with a jerk which sent the animal back on his haunches.

“Fair and softly!” said he. “Whither, and for what reason, do I haste? If a lady sends a bundle to a monk, and the monk returns the bundle to the lady, it is clear there is some collusion between them. And further, if that bundle be of the clothes of a loup-garou, is it not evident that nothing honest can be meant? Fair and softly, I say again, honest Hugues, and let us consider, as we go along, what is best to be done.” The result of this consideration was a string of resolutions highly favourable to Father Bonaventure, but in no ways redounding to the credit either of the Dame of Keridreux or Father Etienne ; and in conclusion, Hugues determined to steal quietly round the castle at nightfall, and, in spite of ghosts and men, to betake himself to the corner of the belt of the forest described by his master, and wait there till the dawn with the clothes, let who would come to claim them.

When it was sufficiently dark for his purpose, he advanced towards the castle, and muffling his horse's heels with handfuls of hay, reached the stable unobserved ; then shouldering the bundle, he set out with a good heart for the forest.

While passing an angle of the building, however, a sound met his ear, which made him pause. It was of so peculiar nature, that he was uncertain for the moment whether it came from above, or below, or around, and he therefore stood stock still where he was, in the shadow of the wall. Presently the sound waxed louder, and the ground beside him seemed to tremble and give way ; and in another moment a part of what appeared to be a subterranean arch fell in, and disclosed an object from which he recoiled in terror. Its form was human ; it gleamed in the dark as white as snow ; and when it began to ascend, as dumb as a spirit, to the surface of the earth, Hugues, unable any longer to combat his feelings, turned tail without disguise, and fled.

The footsteps of the phantom pursued him for some time, lend-

ing preternatural swiftness to his ; but at length, conquering what might after all have been but imagination, he arrived alone at the corner of the forest, deposited the bundle upon the perpendicular stone, and sank fainting at its base.

When he opened his eyes again, startled into life by the howling of the wolves, his hairs stood up one by one upon his head, and cold drops of sweat beaded his brow, as he saw his master standing stark naked before him. The phantom (for such it seemed) seized hold of the bundle, and undoing the knots, dressed himself quietly in the clothes, and bestowing a hearty kick upon the squire—

“And thou, too !” he cried—“thou too must needs be in the cabal ! Thou must skip, thou must fly, with a murrain on thy heels ! as if there was no other place for a Christian Knight to dress in than this accursed corner, with its upright stone of detestable memory.”

“As God is my judge,” said Hugues, “it was not from thee I fled ! I thought thou wert a loup-garou, and I came hither with thy clothes, of which some villanous treason had despoiled thee. But who, in the name of the Virgin, could have dreamed of seeing thee rising from the earth like a spirit—and from thy own ground, too—and as naked as thou wert born !”

“When sawest thou the Monk Bonaventure ?” asked the Knight.

“This afternoon,” replied Hugues ; “but if he said true, he is by this time in the castle consoling thy disconsolate widow.” The Knight ground his teeth, and tearing down a branch from a tree, walked with huge strides towards the castle. The noise he made at the gate speedily roused the servants, who were by this time asleep ; but in their surprise, and confusion, and joy, so long a time elapsed before admittance was afforded, that the birds their master sought were flown.

The Dame of Keridreux, as the history relates, betook herself, Latin, monk, and all, to a far country ; and the Knight, after mourning a reasonable time for his loss, went forth again to the wooing, this time successful, of the fair Beatrix.

Father Etienne, on one pretext and another, declined farther

intermeddling in the spiritual concerns of so dangerous a family ; and Hugues, who could not get the affair of the bundle out of his head, was not sorry for it.

This faithful factotum waxed daily in the good graces of both master and mistress ; and when the Knight, after supper, would relate the story of his translation into a loup-garou, Hugues as regularly took up the thread of the relation at the passages where he came in himself as a witness. As for the truth of the stories so related and so confirmed, it is presumed there can be only one opinion. It need not be concealed, however, that some have supposed the supernatural adventures of the Knight to have taken place either in his own imagination or by the frolicsome agency of his neighbours ; and that his final resumption of his clothes was not really made in the character of a loup-garou, but in that of a self-delivered man who had been incarcerated in the dungeons of his own castle by the fraud and force of a rascally priest and a faithless wife. But these questions are left to the sagacity of the reader.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Eleventh Century.

1000.—Robert, who is thought to have been either a saint or a fool, having had the imprudence to marry a woman who was his relation in the fourth degree, the kingdom was put under ecclesiastical ban. The pair were abandoned by their Court and even domestics ; a frightful silence reigned in the palace ; and nothing that had been polluted by their touch was deemed fit for the use of their fellow-men, till it had been passed through the fire. Robert at length yielded, and divorced his wife—and the more readily that she had given birth, as the priests informed him, to a monster. Having done penance, he burned certain persons for heterodoxy, and then turned to his darling occupations of feeding beggars, and encouraging thieves. Constance, his second wife, was a beautiful fury. She caused the revolt of his two sons, one of whom, Henry, had been *sacred* with him.

1031.—When Henry succeeded to the Crown, he found his brother in arms against him, instigated by the Queen-mother. Quelling this revolt, he next had the idea of conquering Normandy from the young Duke William, with whose father he had found an asylum when under the persecution of Constance before his accession : but here he was beaten. The power of the Church, advancing with gigantic pace, was now declared paramount and universal. Leo IX., in a council held in France in spite of Henry, was declared supreme chief of the Church ; and the kingdom was not unfrequently under the absolute rule of the papal legates. The King, when he wished to *sacrer* his son, had him first elected by the bishops, monks, and lords, and the legates graciously granted their suffrage, and signified the permission of the Pope.

In this reign the key-stone was placed of the grand arch of feudality which bestrode the kingdom from one end to the other. The people were *serfs*—slaves—cattle ; they might be mutilated or killed by their lords with impunity ; but the freemen of the less powerful classes were still worse off ; for no one, except in a fit of frenzy, will injure his own property. Freedom, therefore, was frequently exchanged for probable, or at least possible security. Physical strength and religious authority were opposed to each other, and both were opposed to the people. A bitter war raged between the laymen and churchmen ; but the people were the passive enemies of both, or rather the

senseless target of their wantonness and mischief. The serfs of the country were called *vileins*; those of the town, *bourgeois*. They were forced into battle on foot by their mounted lords, and fought to rivet their chains. France was one wide battle-field, where not the space of a moment was allowed for breathing time, till, in a council, the expedient was hit upon of imposing what was called *the peace of God*. In the fasts and penances of the Church, men were permitted to relax their hostile grasp from the throats of their neighbours, to fix it upon the human instincts. For this *peace* was soon substituted the *truce* of God, during which, people were forbidden to cut each other's throats from Saturday evening till Monday morning. But the truce was not more lasting than the peace, and bloodshed, as before, became lawful every day of the week.

1060.—The reign of Philip I., the successor of Henry, was destined to be the epoch of very extraordinary events. William Duke of Normandy conquered England, and established a despotism as general as feudality permitted. William was fat; and the King of France unfortunately joked upon the circumstance. This occasioned a war, which may be said to have continued, with some *truces of God*, till the battle of Waterloo.

Gregory VII., a turbulent and imperious priest, carried the power, or at least the pretensions, of the Popes to a pitch which had perhaps never before been contemplated even in pontifical ambition.

The King was occupied during the rest of the century with his conjugal affairs. He grew tired of Bertha his wife; and the genealogists (who are first cousins to the poets) complacently proving that she was in some way or other his blood-relation, he divorced her. He then carried off and married Bertrade, Countess of Anjou, with whom he had fallen in love; but when excommunicated by Urban II. he separated from her. He afterwards however, restored her to the rank from which she had been cast; the lords who had thought proper to change wives, took his part; and when another Pope arrived at Poitiers to renew the anathema, a battle took place between the two parties.

1096.—About this period, the voice of a monk, commonly called Peter the Hermit, echoing all over Europe, stirred the hearts of the faithful with religious horror against the infidel masters of Palestine. It was determined, in a council held by Pope Urban II. at Placentia, that a war should be engaged in by Christendom to recover the Holy Sepulchre from the unrighteous grasp of the Mussulmans; and various inducements were held out, both in the shape of rewards and exemptions, to those volunteers whose piety needed such assistance. The expedition was thought by many to be an excellent means of getting rid of debts, dungeons, monastic confinement, law-suits, and bad wives; and not a few were overjoyed to think that they might testify their love for their Lord by cutting the throats of his creatures. The Crusaders, massacring and massacred, at length took Jerusalem; and the finest part of Europe, drained of half its scoundrels, and almost all its fools, remained in comparative prosperity.

The King of the Beggars

What art thou,
That counterfeit'st the person of a King?
SHAKESPEARE.

ONE evening in the spring of the year 1003, a Knight and his *mie** stood on the terrace of the Chateau d'Etampe, a beautiful palace newly built by Queen Constance. They kept close to the wall, in the shadow of one of the lofty pillars, as if to avoid observation, the lady leaning her arm upon the Knight's shoulder, and the latter encircling her delicate waist with his arm. The lady was in full court costume, of the magnificent and fantastic fashion imported by the Queen from Provence; and her appearance thus presented a singular contrast to that of the Knight, who was clad from head to foot in a plain suit of chain armour. He wore the short, broad-bladed sword of the time, more useful for cutting than thrusting; the handle and sheath of which, being neither new nor handsome, exposed its master to a grievous suspicion of poverty, at a period when the birth of chivalry had already introduced into the bosom of the iron age ideas of luxury and magnificence.†

* A word signifying *lady-love*, used by all the old Romancers.

† Some writers trace the origin of chivalry to the first race of the French kings; and in the second race they instance Charlemagne, as having given to his son, Louis le Debonnaire, a sword and armour with certain solemnities. There is no real token, however, of the institution till the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, which is the true age of chivalry of the romancers, however ancient be the names they have chosen to give their heroes. At this period, when the most frightful political anarchy prevailed, every petty lord

"There is no help for it, my dear Milon," said the lady, with a deep sigh. "I fear me there is no help. The dreams of our infancy must now be forgotten—ay, and the vows of our youth. I am no longer by my father's hearth in merry Provence, and thou art no longer hunting the wild boar by his side, and winning his daughter by thy valour. I am now, alas! an orphan, an heiress, and the ward of a king, and thou art but a simple Knight, a wandering soldier, with no more having, except thy sword, than a little tower perched upon a lonely hill."

"Fly with me, Adelaide—only fly with me," said the Knight, "and that little tower, I'll warrant thee, will be enough for our defence. Nor will thy dowry be lost—not a coin of it, I swear to thee! Believe me, I know many a good sword in Provence which will leap out of its scabbard at my bidding, although here in Paris I am nothing."

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed Adelaide, while a smile and a blush lighted up her face. "Madcap as thou art, wert, and ever wilt be! dost thou forget how much this new alliance with the Lady Constance has strengthened King Robert's hands in Provence, and that thou thyself art a vassal of the Count, now the father-in-law of my royal kinsman and guardian? Hush, hush! I say to thee again. Go dance and sing with Queen Constance—go fast and pray with King Robert, and if none of these will move them, even

built his tower upon the brow of a hill, and set up for himself. He levied war upon his neighbours, exacted contributions from travellers, and hanged his vassals at his pleasure. Abductions, robberies, and murders thus became events of every day, and distressed damsels, forlorn widows, and injured orphans, were common place characters. To repress these evils, or even to attempt it, was altogether beyond the royal power, and the institution of chivalry was in all probability intended by its originators, the more powerful and sensible nobles, to act as a substitute for legitimate authority. The robber-lords of the hills may be supposed to have been easily converted by the imagination of the romancers into giants and dragons, while their knights errant, being invested with all the fine and noble qualities which really distinguished the chivalry of a later age, the rude cavalier of the tenth century, nay the ancient Frank himself, appears in those veracious histories as good a Christian and as polite a gentleman as Don Quixote himself.

go home at once to thy lonely tower, and leave thy Adelaide to a convent."

"I tell thee, sweet, thou hast no call to the veil; nay, never drop thine eyes, and prim thy lips. By the mass! there is not a bit of nun about thee. As for my vassalship—hum! it wears as lightly in these disjointed times as this steel jacket. If the Count of Provence will not do me justice when I seek the dower of my wife, it is he who breaks the feudal pact, not I; and I know how to help myself. As for dancing and singing, alas! those merry days are over! I sold or pledged every thing I possessed, except the stone walls of the tower, to follow thee here, and put on a brave appearance in the train of Constance; and now thou seest how it is;" and he turned himself round, half-sorrowfully, half-jestingly—"as bare as thy hand—not even a cloak to cover me!"

"Alas, alas, indeed!" sighed Adelaide, "I knew it would end thus, and I grieved to see thy new finery, although thou wert so handsome in it. As for me, I cannot wring one coin out of the hands of this strange King, who spends his money in a way to make one half of the world believe him a saint, and the other half a fool. But these jewels, which I have carried hidden in my bosom many days, waiting for this opportunity, will at least serve thy need till better fortune comes."

"Thanks, thanks, Adelaide!" said the Knight, kissing her hand; "but keep thy jewels, my fair love, and, if luck favours me, thou shalt have money too. My suit with Constance must for the present rest where it is; she is a cold-hearted woman, who will give nothing—out of love matters—without its full value in return; she will not stir in my cause till I can show her that it is her interest to do so. I must try the King."

"What, wilt thou turn monk?"

"Beggar rather, I think; none else go down with our pious King Robert."

"Or thief," suggested Adelaide, laughing; "that would be better still. A man who is poor enough to steal, cannot choose but thrive at court; and Robert, it is well known, so far from inflicting punishment, does not even demand restitution."

"Ha—that is no bad thought. Suppose I were to unite the characters? There is nothing more common. At all events, I will try the King—assure thee, love, I will try the King; and if in a few days I do not play the very devil at the palace, why, say, I am not Milon the Madcap." The lovers then parted in the common fashion of lovers, which is to say, with a farewell, a honey word, and a close kiss; the lady glided into a door of the palace, and the Knight, stealing round the terrace, leaped over a wall, and disappeared.

The next day was the festival of Easter, and Robert the Pious had prepared his Court to go through the duties of the day with proper pomp and solemnity. The procession set forth betimes for the great church from the palace, and disclosed such a scene as was never presented to the eyes of Frenchmen before or since. The banner of St. Martin, surrounded by a legion of monks, cleared the way, and immediately after came the King, walking between two beggars, and followed by monks, beggars, and courtiers, jostling for the pas. Then there was a large body of cavalry clad in steel from top to toe, and after these the household officers, in their holiday dresses; while the cavalcade was closed by such parties of the rabble—and they were not small—as considered it respectable or devout to walk in the procession of the holy King. Crucifixes, censers, banners of devotion, and reliquaries, distributed plentifully throughout the line, gave an air of grandeur and glory to the scene; while the chanting of the monks, the tramp-whing of the horses, and the eager voices of the mob, who pressed on both sides upon the actors in the ceremony, confused the ear with their heterogeneous sounds.

Robert himself was a man apparently not more than thirty-five years of age, well-formed, and reasonably tall; and his face, handsome without intelligence, and grave without dignity, in a lower station of life, would have seemed the index to a common character. While walking along, his thoughts appeared to be busy with that darling part of his subjects, the begging and vagabond poor. He conversed familiarly with the two individuals beside him, who merited their distinguished post in the procession by the superior

misery of their dress, and richer horror of their maladies and distortions. Frequently he would stop to remove with his own kindly hands a stone from their path ; and on these occasions, as a glimpse was caught of his benign countenance by their comrades, a storm of blessings, stuttered, snivelled, drawled, and whined, would arise.

Some held up the stump of an arm, some grinned to show the abstraction of their teeth, and some uncovered to the royal eyes their dreadful sores, in a manner that would have sickened a less pious heart and stomach. In the costume of these beings a variety of misery was displayed, which evidenced an imagination truly poetical. Some were hung round with the fragments of twenty suits, no two of which were of the same colour, or their substance in the same stage of decomposition ; some were thrust into a garment so miserably tight that their joints had wrought their way through, and vied with the artificial covering in unsoundness of texture and variety of hue ; others were encumbered with a multitudinous garment of rags, which overflowed their persons with the most melancholy extravagance ; and others again, destitute of any regular habiliments, had swathed themselves scantily in shreds of linen that appeared to have been stolen from some ancient grave.

Among this troop of wretches, who were all well known to the King, there was one stranger beggar, who thrust himself into the procession, at the peril, it would seem, of life and limb. No sooner was he recognised as an intruder, than a whisper ran through the line—"Who is he? What does this fellow want? Send him to the rear! Kick him—punch him—bite him——" and presently a hundred admonitory hints, in the shape of a thrust with a wooden arm, a kick from a clouted shoe, or a smash upon the shins with an iron-pointed crutch, were offered for his reflection. The unfortunate stranger, who was stone-blind, but in other respects a vigorous fellow, unknowing which way to turn, plunged at every blow he received nearer the centre of honour and danger, mauling or overturning whomsoever stood in his way, and shouting

out the whole time, "Mercy, mercy on the blind!—have mercy on the stone-blind!" The King at length heard the cries, and, struck with his miserable appearance—for the beggar's face was as much black as white, and his dress nothing more than a series of wisps of straw rudely fastened—interfered in his favour, and bestowed on him a place in the march directly behind the Royal back.

When the procession reached the church, a basin and water was presented to King Robert, and the multitude rushing around, gazed in breathless silence, all being curious to see how a King would wash his hands. At this moment the stranger beggar threw himself upon his knees and renewed his shout—"Mercy, mercy on the blind!—have mercy on the stone blind!" In vain the attendants endeavoured to stop his mouth, his voice rang the louder every moment—"Mercy, mercy, mercy on the blind!" The King at length, disturbed with pity, inquired in what manner he could assist him.

"By thy prayers, O holy King, and by the sprinkling of water," replied the beggar, "sprinkle but a little water on my eyes, and pray for me to thy fellow saints, and so I shall recover my sight."

"Thou art mistaken, my poor brother," said Robert, "I am no saint, but a wretched sinner of a King."

"And wilt thou then turn a deaf ear to my lamentations, thou who clothest the naked and feedest the hungry? Wilt thou refuse a prayer and a drop of water to the blind? Oh have mercy on the blind!—have mercy on the stone blind!" The good King, melting into tears of compassion, then did as he was desired. he sprinkled some water upon the beggar's face, and lifting up his joined hands, uttered a fervent prayer. The words were no sooner out of his lips, than the blind man opened his eyes and saw!^{*}

* Helgaldus, *Epitomæ Vitæ Roberti Regis*. This writer, to whom we are indebted for most of the particulars we possess of Robert's life, was a monk, and then Abbot of Ileury, and afterwards Archbishop of Bourges. He died in 1048.

King Robert for some moments was dumb with astonishment ; but at length, striking his hands together — “ A miracle ! ” he cried — “ a miracle ! ”

“ A miracle ! ” repeated his courtiers. “ A miracle ! ” echoed the mob to its remotest corners ; and the monks, overjoyed at such an event occurring on the very threshold of their own church, were loudest of all in shouting “ A miracle ! ” The cavalcade then rushed tumultuously into the holy edifice, to give thanks to God for so signal a favour.

When the religious duties of the day were over, the King proceeded in the same state to the palace of the Chateau d’Etampes, to sup, by invitation, with the Queen. The Court of this beautiful and haughty Princess were assembled on the terrace to watch the approach of the cavalcade, and took no pains to conceal the amusement and contempt which its appearance inspired. Some of the gay lords of Provence welcomed the tribe of beggars with ironical gravity, and ushered them with much ceremony into the palace ; and others, conscious that they were under the protection of the Queen, even ventured to address some jokes to their sovereign on the splendour of his equipage.*

The appearance of these favourites and countrymen of Constance was indeed in striking contrast with that of the King’s retinue. On the middle part of their head they had no hair, and their beards were shaven like Merry-andrews.† They wore a high bear-skin cap, and a coat hardly reaching to their thighs, open before and behind ; their legs were curiously girded with bandelettes, and their shoes were *à la poulaine*—that is to say, with points enormously long, and turned back towards the shin. They walked with a leaping motion, and at every de-

* The people of Provence, says Mezeray, at all periods, have loved dancing, singing, play, buffoons, and mountebanks.—Hist. France.

† Rodulph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temporis. This old chronicler is not known to the general reader except by his surname of *Glaber*, or, the Bald. He was a quarrelsome and licentious monk, who suffered expulsion from seven monasteries successively. His work was published in 1047.

scent of the foot, their spurs, of a singular length, pricked the ground *

Constance herself, the star and centre of these fantastic satellites, was one of the most beautiful women of the age. Her skin was of a dazzling whiteness, which procured for her the surname of *Blanche*, and her beautiful blue eyes, bright almost to fierceness, proclaimed at once the voluptuous woman and the ambitious and termagant queen †. On this occasion, although she did not attempt to silence the sarcasms of her courtiers, she received the King herself with much show of respect. She led him by the hand into the palace, and even condescended to compliment him on his appearance, for Robert, either out of good-nature, or already drilled into awe of his wife, had dressed himself with a magnificence altogether foreign to his habits. His robe of state more especially, of rich scarlet silk, ‡ was fringed or rather furbelowed, with gold towards the bottom with a surprising sumptuousness, and indeed, taking him altogether, his appearance was far from being unkingly.

These outward circumstances of pomp, however, had no effect either upon his mind or behaviour. While walking with the Queen, he still kept his eye upon his beggars, and before being

* *Adalberon, Carmen, ad Robertum, Regem Francorum.*

Pillens excelsus de pelle Libystidis ursæ,
Et vestis crurum tenuis est curtata talari,
Finditur anteriùs, nec parcit posteriori
Illa baldringo cingit strictissima picto, &c

This satirical poem is in the form of a dialogue between the author and King Robert, in which the former complains of the military manners and costume newly adopted by the clergy. Adalberon, a native of Lorraine, was Bishop of Laon. He died in 1030, after having been fifty three years a bishop.

† "And truly," saith Mezeray, "if the King is a saint, as in my opinion he is, Constance was of no small use in trying his patience and purifying his other virtues"—Hist. France

‡ Worn only by princes, knights, and women of quality. *Rouge* is formed from the word *rogue*, haughty, proud.—Mem. sur la Chevalerie, t. 1, p. 344

prevailed upon to sit down to table, he saw that they were comfortably provided for in other apartments. One of this train, however, was by no means disposed to sink so suddenly from his companionship with royalty, and he stuck pertinaciously by the King's side, even after he had entered the grand banqueting-room.

"Stand back, fellow!" cried Constance, sweeping past him to take her place—"Who art thou, I wonder?"

"I am Rapaton, Madam," replied the beggar, following her to her seat, and placing his mouth close to her ear.

"Rapaton!" repeated Constance, shrinking away from the man of life and straw.

"Rapaton!" echoed the courtiers, gathering around to stare at the phenomenon.

"Rapaton!" exclaimed the serving-men behind, passing the word in their turn.

"Rapaton!" shouted the whole train of beggars in the surrounding apartments, as they made a rush towards the banqueting-hall, in expectation of some new miracle. All was confusion; the ladies shrieked, the gentlemen drew their swords, and some cried treason. Rapaton alone preserved an imperturbable calmness and gravity, and in the midst of the riot was about to seat himself coolly by the side of the King, when Robert, somewhat ashamed, drew him down from the chair, and half by entreaties, half by force, got him under the table at his feet. The cause of the disturbance being thus removed, order was gradually restored; the beggars were shoved out of the room, and the Abbot of Dijon related to Constance and her astonished court the manner of the miracle that had been performed, eulogizing highly the sanctity of the King, and the faith of the man of straw.

The company had not long begun to eat, when they were startled by a sound of gnawing, and tearing, and growling under the table, that might have seemed to proceed from a famished wolf. This was caused by the compassionate King having slipped down a large piece of meat to the beggar at his feet,* who fastened

* Helgald. in Vit. Rob.

thus voraciously upon the royal bounty. The guests who had the bad luck to be seated at this end of the board, hastily shrugged up their legs; some turned pale, and were constrained to cover their mouths with their handkerchief, and all looked aghast at one another in surprise and confusion. Constance, on this accumulation of cross-grained occurrences, which turned her fête into ridicule and annoyance, was scarcely able to restrain her anger within the bounds of decency; and at length King Robert prevailed upon himself to order the beggars, one and all, provided they had finished their meal, to be dismissed from the palace. Rapaton accordingly crawled from his retreat, with a huge bone in his mouth, and made his exit from the presence, gnawing as he went.

When the banquet was over, Robert rose up and went to take his Queen by the hand; when, alas! it was discovered that the furbelow of his robe, to the amount of at least six ounces of good gold, was absent!* At this sight, the long-smothered fury of the Queen broke out like a tempest; she stamped upon the floor, her eyes flashed lightning, and with a voice discordant with passion, she ordered the miscreant to be pursued and executed upon the spot. Robert himself was disconcerted for a moment; but at length, with a benignant smile, the good King interposed between the wrath of Constance and its object.

"Not a hair of his head shall they hurt, poor rogue!" said he, "not a straw of his back! Alas! what grievous necessity he must be in, when he could be tempted to do such a wrong!"

"Let me go, at least, sir," said the Count Eudes, "and recover the stolen property." The King pondered for a moment.

"Not so," said he at length—"not so. It is clear that God consented to this deed by His permitting it to come to pass; and it is therefore our duty to believe that He will turn the gold to better use in the hands where it now is, than in mine."† This pious reply silenced Constance and struck the whole court with

* Helgald. in Vit. Rob.

† "Helgald. in Vit. Rob.

wonder ; and some admiring greatly at the King's wisdom, and some as greatly at his folly, the party broke up.

This incident seemed to have the effect of exalting Rapaton rather than otherwise in the King's estimation. His influence increased daily, and from a private subject, he became the chief beggar, a post of no small dignity in the court of the good King Robert. The King at length, from debating with him on subjects of religion, acquired the habit of asking his opinion on general affairs ; and Rapaton in a little while, without changing his habits or manner, or even a straw of his dress, found himself, to all intents and purposes, the privy councillor of his master.

Who this Rapaton was, it puzzled greatly the good people of Paris to know. No one could tell whence he came ; and no one, not even the King himself, could point out the place of his abode. He appeared like a ghost when summoned, and departed as he listed, as suddenly and as trackless as if he had dissolved into air. Some said he was an evil spirit, some a sorcerer, some a saint, and some sinner ; but all allowed that he was a most notorious thief. Nor was the King himself, as we have seen, ignorant of this troublesome quality in his favourite ; nay, on one occasion he even caught him in the very fact.

This occurred one day when Robert was on his knees before the altar, engaged in fervent prayer ; he felt a slight tugging at his cloak, and looking down, without moving his head, perceived Rapaton busily engaged in stripping the rich fur from its borders.

"Hold," said the King mildly—"that is enough at a time ; leave the rest for some one whose necessities may be as great as thine."*

The Queen, having tried all her art in vain to displace this new favourite, at length bethought herself of endeavouring to gain him over to her own interest ; and one evening, in conversation with her ladies, expressed an anxious desire to see and converse with the celebrated beggar. But where to find him at once was the question ; for he was not then in the palace, and no human being

knew the place of his retreat. One of the ladies remarked that it was said the King had only to wish for him when he appeared; and another repeated a story of his employing a certain number of spirits who constantly gave him intelligence when any one desired his presence.

"Nay, of a surety," said Adelaide, the King's ward, "it is commonly told that one has only to form the wish to see him, without even expressing it in words, and Rapaton will appear in the same hour!" The Queen listened in scornful silence to this feminine tattle, and then fell into a reverie. Her ladies went out and in, and passed to and fro without disturbing her; but at length, as one of them uttered a loud scream, she raised her head, and saw the beggar standing before her.

"I am here," cried Rapaton; "what dost thou want?" Constance at first shrank and turned pale; but speedily recovering her self-possession, she commanded her ladies to leave the room.

"I confess I wanted to see thee," said she, when they were alone, "but I fear offending thee by what I shall say."

"Speak," said Rapaton; "I shall take all in good part."

"Know thou first, that I have seen with compassion thy unhappy state of poverty, and with proportionable disgust the meanness of thy pretended patron the King, my husband, who forces thee even to steal for thy support."

"Good, good," growled the beggar. "Compassion is very good!"

"Had I a servant so deserving," continued Constance, "I should know better how to reward him. What sayest thou? Wilt thou change a master for a mistress? Art thou content?"

"I am thine at a word," answered Rapaton. "Speak on. Shall I go strangle him with this rope?" and he untwisted from his body a hard, compact rope of straw, which was part of his ordinary dress, discovering underneath a great brawny chest covered with skin which looked like stained ox-leather.

"Thou art wide of my meaning," said Constance, as coolly as it the wretch had proposed nothing more than a jest. "From the King squandering his money on undeserving persons, and neglect-

ing such as thou, and from a thousand other proofs of perversity or incapacity, I have been led to believe that it would be better both for him and for France, if the balance of power did but incline a little to my side. At present it is equal. He does not do aught of importance without my consent; nor I without his. Now, as the affected mildness of his character and conversation affords no just ground, in the eyes of the uninformed world, for the exercise of that wholesome discipline by which wives know how to conquer the obstinacy of their lords, I would fain have some ostensible cause of complaint. Suppose I become jealous? He is fond of the society of women; and although I care not one straw of thy doublet about his fidelity, yet had I but reasonable or apparent cause of suspicion, it would amply serve my turn for the present."*

"Thou shalt have it," said Rapaton, "and that suddenly. But thou knowest, Constance," continued he, laying his great hand upon her shoulder, and looking into her face with an odious grin, "thou knowest that we persons of wit do not make circumstances, but use them. Patience, patience; thou shalt be jealous, I'll warrant thee, and the world shall see that thou hast cause!" The Queen then, in earnest of her intended liberality, presented him with a jewel from her own snow-white arms.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Rapaton, as he snatched it eagerly from her hand. "Good, good; jewels are very good. Ho! ho! ho!" and his hollow laugh rolled like distant thunder through the palace as he withdrew.

The next day, being Saturday, was kept with great solemnity by the King, who was grieved at the impiety exhibited by a majority of his subjects, in neglecting the abstinence from meat on this day, commanded for the first time three years before.† A considerable part of the day was spent at church, and then the King and Queen,

* Mezeray, Hist. France.

† Rodolph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temporis. This regulation was not generally observed till towards the close of the fifteenth century. Thomasin, *Des Jeunes de l'Eglise*. An illustration will be found in the *fabliau* of *Les Trois Aveugles*, in the collection of *Le Grand d'Aussy*.

with their respective parties, met in the afternoon. Adelaide, although a kinswoman of Robert, was in the suite of Constance, and Melon, surnamed the Madcap, although a Knight of Provence, was seen among the followers of the King.

This change of sides, in fact, had taken place some time before ; and a singular alteration in other respects was observable both in the Knight and his *mie*. Melon, no longer a bare and, to say the truth, somewhat of a vagabond-looking knight, was now the gayest, the most gallant, and the most splendidly equipped of the whole chivalry of the Court ; and, what was still more strange, so far from losing ground on this account in the estimation of the godly King, he seemed to advance farther every day in his good graces. The *entrée* was permitted to him without question or limitation ; and he and Adelaide, instead of being forced, as before, to meet in secrecy and at night, spent whole hours together, even in the daytime, without exciting remark. What he gained, however, in one quarter, he lost in another ; and the farther he advanced in the King's favour, the farther he receded from that of the Queen. Yet, by managing, notwithstanding, with some prudence and more boldness, Melon always contrived at least to elude the vigilance of Constance when he could not disarm her hostility, and a day seldom passed without a meeting having taken place, on one pretence or other, between him and his mistress. As for Adelaide, she treated her royal kinsman and guardian on every occasion with marked disregard, and attached herself openly to the party of the Queen.

On the afternoon we have arrived at, the two lovers met in the church with their respective cortèges, and as the shades of twilight gathered around, they gradually wandered from the crowd, the lady attended by her maid, till they met by natural attraction in a remote part of the building.

"Joy, joy !" cried the Madcap, clasping his mistress to his bosom. "Rapaton has been successful ; he is already the sworn servant of Constance, and will be able, before many days more have passed, to demand a worthy recompense for his pains ! In the meantime he sends thee that——" putting a purse into her hand.

"Nay, it is thine own—a portion of thy patrimony, of thy future dower, sweet Adelaide, and as such will one day be duly deducted." Adelaide, as she began, apparently, to remonstrate, was stopped by a sudden stir in the church; distant lights were seen moving towards them—for it was now almost dark—and one or other of the royal parties was evidently on the move. To be seen thus by Constance, in the present stage of the affair, would have been ruinous, and they hesitated for a moment as to the step they should take. Their decision, whatever it was, came too late, for the next instant heavy steps were heard approaching; and, signing hastily to the serving-maid to get into hiding, they retreated themselves into the corner of an aisle. The steps approached nearer and nearer, and at length made a full stop directly opposite to the lovers; when they discovered, by the dim light of the lofty window, King Robert.

Melon, either really afraid of detection, or willing to take advantage of an opportunity which might seem to warrant a closer embrace, drew his mistress farther into the corner; and then, shutting their eyes and holding their breath, they waited till the intruder should pass. The motion was not so stealthily performed but that a rustling of the Knight's new scarlet silk cloak made an impression on Robert's ear, which caused him to bend his eyes upon the darkness visible of their retreat, and great was the alarm and mortification of the holy King on discovering a man and woman in a situation at least so equivocal. After hesitating in confusion for a moment, he was about to pass on, when recollecting not only the scandal which such a scene might occasion, but the ignominy with which the imprudent pair would be covered, if detected by his approaching train, he took the royal cloak from his shoulders, and stepping gently into the corner, threw it over them.*

The King had no sooner passed on than Melon and his mistress darted from their hiding-place.

"Fly," whispered the Knight; "turn to the left, round the

* Helgald. in Vit. Rob.

corner of St. Mary's chapel, and thou wilt be in the train of Constance in an instant ;" and as soon as Adelaide had disappeared, he ran into the corner where her maid had crept, and, throwing the royal cloak over her head, commanded her to wait there without stirring till he should return.

When the devotions of Queen Constance were finished, she had sent to call the King ; but Robert was not to be found. He had taken a solitary stroll, it seems, as was sometimes his wont, through the spacious edifice, and was supposed to be at prayers in one of the small, dark chapels at the sides. The Queen, after waiting for some time, prepared to leave the chapel ; but just as she approached the door the beggar Rapaton came in.

"Thou hast not forgotten?" said she, in a confidential whisper, as he passed.

"Forgotten what?" asked the beggar gruffly. "Oh, I remember—hum! Suppose I indulge thee even on the instant? Where is the King?"

"I know not—he has been sought for in vain."

"Seek no farther, but wait here till he come. Ask for his cloak, and leave not the church till it be found ; thou wilt find it, if thou searchest well, in the corner of the aisle near Our Lady's chapel." The beggar then disappeared in the interior of the building, and Robert was seen the next moment slowly and gravely approaching the door.

"Thou hast been waited for," said Constance. "Come, let us away ; put on thy cloak, it waxeth late."

"I am ready to attend thee."

"Put on thy cloak then—come."

"Nay, it matters not : I am too warm ; some one shall carry it after us."

"I say, thou shalt put it on ! What, on an evening like this? Nay, if thou lord'st it in all other matters, I will at least be Queen in trifles ; I will, in sooth. Put on thy cloak."

"I must go and seek for it, then," said Robert. "I have left it behind me," and he moved hastily away. Constance, signing to her train to follow, nimbly overtook him ; and the whole

cortège, with lighted torches, set forth to look for the King's cloak.

Robert in vain requested his wife to wait for him; and then, ashamed of insisting farther on such a trifle, purposely took the wrong direction, in the hope that, before they had made the circuit of the church, the individuals, whoever they were, to whom he had so charitably lent the garment, might have taken themselves out of the way. In the meantime, to gain the longer space, he examined the chapels, one by one, as he passed them; till at length a little Provençal page, a shrewd and forward boy, in the service of Adelaide, suddenly exclaimed:

"I'll lay my life, it is in the corner of the aisle, near Our Lady's chapel, where the King was bestowing charity upon the young woman."

"What? What is that thou sayest?" exclaimed Constance.

"Charity!" repeated Robert. "By the faith of the Lord! I do not remember me of bestowing charity upon any young woman this evening."

"Oh, aye indeed," said the page, "and by the same token, when I approached the place, thou didst draw the maiden back into the corner; which caused me to think of the exhortation of the holy priest, that in works of charity and mercy we ought not to let our right hand know what our left doeth."

"Imp of mischief!" muttered Robert inwardly. "He mistook me for the man in the corner! Woe betide me if he be not there to answer for himself!" and he began to stride with great steps towards the chapel, followed by Constance with her knights, dames, and damsels, and even the serving-maidens and young pages running eagerly after, as if to witness some wonderful show.

"At the best," thought the King, as they drew near the spot, "at the very best it is an awkward thing for my cloak to be found in such a situation!" and he suddenly slackened his pace, and turned a glance upon Constance. The Queen appeared greatly agitated.

"What!" she exclaimed, in a loud, shrill voice, "does thy heart fail thee? Dost thou hang back? Dost thou change colour?"

On, on with thee, false King! On, perjured husband! and exhibit, in the damning proof of thy guilt, the death-warrant of thy too fond, too faithful Constance!"

"It is here," cried Adelaide's page. "Here I saw the King bestowing charity upon the young woman."

The whole train crowded eagerly round, and twenty torches flashed more than the light of day into the recess. The royal cloak was indeed there, and beneath it, as the spectators could guess by the shape, a human figure in a sitting posture. The next moment Constance rushed in, dragged the voluminous garment away, and discovered to the wondering eyes of the Court a remarkably pretty Provençal girl, the serving-maiden of Adelaide.

At this sight the Queen uttered a shriek that echoed through the whole edifice, and fell lifeless into the arms of her ladies. The alarmed monks came running from all quarters to the spot, some of the attendants flew for water, while others cut open the dress of their mistress, and others boxed the ears of the Provençal girl. Many of the knights ran up the aisle to conceal their laughter; not a few of the ladies shrieked and swooned in imitation of the Queen; the serving-women scolded and squalled at the top of their voices; and the young pages, enjoying a storm of any kind, shouted and clapped their hands.

Robert, in the meantime, stood wildly staring at the Queen and the girl alternately, not knowing what to say in his defence, and unable, if he had known, to make himself heard in the din. At last, perceiving the bystanders to be all occupied either with themselves or the other delinquent—for by this time he felt as if he had really been one himself—he edged himself gradually out of the crowd, and made for the door. At this moment the Queen unluckily came to herself, and seeing him already at some distance—for the whole place was now in a blaze of light with tapers and torches—rushed after, at full speed, shrieking forth a torrent of invectives at every step.

"Base, cruel, faithless, perjured man!" she cried. "What! In this holy house, at the foot of the sanctuary, on the very threshold of the ever Virgin Mother herself! And—oh shame of

shames! oh intolerable insult!—an ignoble serving wench, a common grisette!” Her whole Court followed her with emulative haste and noise; monks, knights, dames, damsels, pages, and grisettes, all joining in the cry; till Robert, terrified and ashamed, quickened his steps almost to a run, and fairly converted his retreat into a flight.

This unlucky adventure was attended with all the fortunate consequences to the Queen which that princess had anticipated from the assistance of Rapaton. Robert had nothing to advance in his own behalf but a simple avowal of innocence; and when this was made, it was necessary to listen in silence to the eloquence of his wife.

“The more he listened to her reprimands,” says Mezeray, “the more her empire was extended over his person; till at length, arriving, as she supposed, at the situation of supreme mistress, she drove all his friends from his presence, and alarmed and turned topsy-turvy the whole palace.”*

Among all the changes which took place, Rapaton alone kept his footing. With him it seemed that the Queen durst not meddle, or, what perhaps is more likely, she calculated on his future services, should they become necessary. The love, therefore, which the King had before divided with his whole Court was now concentrated and bestowed upon one; and Rapaton attained to as much power as the first subject of the most insignificant King in Europe could possess. That power, it may be supposed, was not exercised either in war, or legislation, or diplomacies; for, in fact, the King himself was governed partly by the will of his nobles, and partly by that of his wife; but in matters of charity, in donations, in holy processions, in the valuation of relics, and, in short, in all affairs connected with religion, mendicity, and thievery, Rapaton was supreme.

“I have been thinking,” said he one day to Robert, after having appeared for some time to be lost in contemplation of the formidable phalanxes of beggars by whom they were surrounded, and

* Hist. France.

whose homage was very equally shared between him and his royal friend, "I have been thinking whether it is thou or I that is the King of the Beggars!"

"I will divide honours with thee," replied Robert mildly: "it is I who am the King of the Beggars, and thou—thou art the King of the Thieves." Picking and stealing, in fact, became employments well nigh indispensable in the court of a monarch who had been so ruinously free with his presents of white vestments, sacerdotal ornaments, precious crosses, golden chalices, censers of perfume, and vases of silver; and the profession was quite unattended with anything like risk—a piteous remonstrance being the worst consequences of detection.*

The fortunes of Melon the Madcap ascended with the rise of the beggar. A singular sympathy appeared to have taken place between these two strikingly contrasted persons. They were not seen indeed in frequent personal association; nay, it is not known that they were ever observed in company together in their lives; but the beggar, notwithstanding, in more important matters than the courtesies of society, appeared to take as great an interest in Melon as if he had been his own son. Robert at length, influenced by this eccentric adviser, gave his consent to the Knight's marriage with Adelaide, and Rapaton hurried away to the Queen to beg, or rather demand, her assent, without which he well knew he had gained nothing.

Constance at the interview was exceedingly polite, but she regretted having already disposed of her interest in another quarter. Rapaton begged, insisted, threatened, but to no purpose: he reproached her with ingratitude; but she asserted, and with truth, that he had already been handsomely paid for his services: he hinted even at the imprudence of provoking a man whose knowledge and power she must have known were supernatural; but Constance, throwing open a door, merely pointed, with a significant glance, to the little page, now transferred from Adelaide's service to her own.

"Come, come," said she, "do not let us quarrel about trifles. If the Madcap be thy kinsman, he shall have promotion; and if he is only a common customer for thy services, I shall take care that thou lovest nothing by being unable to deal." Rapaton at last left the presence apparently not much dissatisfied.

Affairs were in this position when a wholesale robbery was committed on the King, which even he could by no means overlook. He was robbed of the duchy of Burgundy by Otho William, son of his uncle's widow by a former husband. When the Duke died, this step-son coolly stepped into his place; and when Robert, who claimed the territory as his uncle's heir, was about to take possession, he was told to go about his business. This was much too bad; the exploits of Rapaton were nothing to it; and the King, to the great surprise of everybody, got into a towering passion. In a private quarrel he could only have called upon the attendance of his private vassals;* but the present dispute affecting the interest and honour of the state, he was able to summon to his assistance the Duke of Normandy, a great vassal of the crown, and between them they mustered a very formidable army.

It was the opinion of some persons, that after all Otho William was more sinned against than sinning; it having been clearly proved that the Duke of Burgundy disposed of his estate to him by will; although others pretended, in the first place, that the Duke was trepanned into this testament by the intrigues of his wife, and in the second place, that he had no right to dispose of his estate to any one, falling as it did, or ought to have done, to the legal heir. Whether the Queen was influenced in her opinions on the question by considerations of law or right, it is impossible now to say, or whether she merely dreaded the increase of consequence which success in arms would bestow upon her husband, but certain it is, that although the tone of her voice on this occasion was decidedly bellicose, the tendency of her speeches was in favour of peace.

Here, however, she found herself in a minority. The nobles

* Mezeray, *Hist. France*.

supported the King; the King arrayed himself in glittering armour, and waxing valiant at the sights and sounds of glorious war, began to think and talk of a divorce. Constance was soon at her wit's end, and at length determined, as a last resource, to take counsel of Rapaton in this unexpected exigency.

Rapaton, however, was not to be found. The military mania, it appeared, had seized on him as well as the rest, and for some days he had been seen armed with a tremendous pole shod with iron, and a cottage door torn from its hinges fastened, by way of a buckler, to his left arm. The courtiers at first laughed and jested at this strange figure; but being challenged to try their prowess with him in combat, they looked more closely at the warlike apparition, and held their tongues. The beggar then took his departure for the seat of war with the first of the troops.

Constance no sooner heard of his absence than her desire to see him increased tenfold. Reflecting on his extraordinary sagacity, the activity of his motions, and his influence over the King, and almost ready to give him credit for the supernatural power and knowledge he laid claim to, she became convinced that he, and he alone, could save her; nor was it merely the destruction of her connubial supremacy which she dreaded, for, in truth, the King's hint of a divorce was at that time of day no empty menace, he and his Queen being related, although distantly, by blood.*

It was still possible that Rapaton had not by this time gone too far to be recalled; and Melon was the only person, next to Robert himself, who could be expected to know any thing about the beggar's motions. To Melon, accordingly, she sent; and the Knight, who was just about to leave the city with a body of troops which had been placed under his command, speedily made his appearance. He was mounted on a splendid charger, and dressed, as well as his horse, in all the bravery of the time. His eyes sparkled, his cheek was flushed, his frame seemed to possess a

* At this period, to be absolutely secure from divorce, it was necessary to seek a wife in a distant country, for the priests had stretched the laws of incest as wide as an English Act of Parliament, through which, a member of the House has said, a coach and six may be driven.

superabundance even of animal life, and any one might have told at a glance that the Madcap was going to war. There was another reason besides for his excitation. He had just parted with Adelaide—he had assured her that the King had formally consented to their union, without a single “if” or “provided,” pointing to his wife or any other party whatever. She had bound a crimson scarf upon his arm, and he wore publicly the colours of his *mie*; and, with tears standing in her beautiful eyes, she had blessed the banner he carried, which bore the legend, “*Elle et la Gloire !*”

“Know’st thou aught of Rapaton?” inquired the Queen.

“I know what men say,” replied Melon; “some, that he is a saint, for all he is an arrant thief; some, that he is a conjurer; although, if he cannot conjure himself into a better doublet, I, for one, would not give much for his art; some, that he is——”

“That is not the question,” interrupted Constance. “Know’st thou where he is?”

“He is on his way to the wars, as people tell, and must now be at least a dozen leagues on the road.”

“Would I could see him!” sighed the Queen.

“Why, that is enough, or there is no faith in man. Thou shalt see him, and that within an hour.”

“At twelve leagues distance?”

“Ay, Madam, or twelve thousand, if report says true. For my part, I know nothing. Rapaton is a good friend of mine; but why, or wherefore, he best understands.”

“God’s faith!” cried the Queen; “they fool me as if I was a thing already thrown by. Hark thee, Sir Madcap; I am not yet fallen so low as thou thinkest; if I see not Rapaton within an hour, or when I do see him if I find him not what I could wish, it will be the worse for thee. Look to thy mistress!” and she turned angrily away. Melon looked after her a moment in surprise; then, shrugging his shoulders, he leaped upon his horse and galloped off. The Queen shut herself up alone in her room, swearing mentally to poison Adelaide if she could not otherwise prevent the marriage. She was roused from her meditations by a

rustling noise before her, and, looking up, with difficulty repressed a shriek, as she saw the mysterious beggar.

"I am here ! Speak ; what dost thou want ?" said Rapaton.

"I want," replied Constance, mastering her nerves by a strong effort—"I want to regain all I have lost, and to preserve all I dread to lose."

"This time," said Rapaton, "it is I who must fix the hire. Thou hast lost thy sovereignty, and if I render it thee back, it must not be employed, as before, to oppose my designs. Promise me this—nay, swear it—and then thou may'st command."

"Alas ! alas !" said the Queen, "if thou art able, and at so short a warning, to perform the task I would now impose, it would be vain for an ordinary mortal to attempt opposition to any of thy designs."

"Swear, swear !" said Rapaton ; "I have no time for gossip ; swear upon an *if*, and the oath will be void, if my share of the compact is unfulfilled." The Queen then knelt before a crucifix, and took to witness her favourite saint, St. Savinian the Martyr, that she would be true to her part of the engagement.

"Now speak," said the beggar ; "command, and think it done."

"The King goes forth to his first war ; he lays siege to Auxerre with a powerful army."

"What of that ! Speak !"

"An army that could crush a much greater town—even as thy jaws would destroy a hazel-nut !"

"And what of that ?"

"I would have the siege unsuccessful—I would have him driven with disgrace from before the walls—I would have him fly from the enemy, even like a woman or a dastard !"

"Ho ! ho ! ho !" laughed Rapaton, "and is that all ? Ho ! ho ! ho !" and as he left the palace the astonished Queen still heard his hollow laugh echoing through the halls.

"God's faith !" cried Constance, "this man is assuredly either a knave or a sorcerer. I have asked him with his single arm to turn back a mighty army in its mid career, and he answers only——"

"Ho ! ho ! ho !" roared Rapaton as he passed the window ; and the Queen, turning pale, sat down exhausted.

The united army of France and Normandy was before Auxerre. This town, situated on the confines of Burgundy, partly on a hill and partly in a valley, and washed by the river Yonne, presented an appearance of picturesque beauty which might have seemed to gentle imaginations rather to deprecate than brave the terrors of war. Looking more closely, however, one might have observed a certain grimness in the regularity of the fortifications, and an uncompromising sternness in the care with which the surrounding country had been shaved to the very soil of every thing capable of ministering to human necessities ; while beside the town the splendid monastery of St. Germain, with its strong walls folded around it, looked like a guard drawn out for the purpose of warning and defence.

On the other hand, the royal army, consisting, as was then the custom, almost wholly of cavalry, exhibited an aspect at once grand and dreadful. The armour of this vast array of horsemen consisted, to all appearance, of a single piece, descending from the head to the foot, like a tight jacket and pantaloons, formed of minute iron rings interlaced. An appearance, however, of infinite variety was conferred by the cloaks and scarves of the knights, of all imaginable hues, the various colours of the horses, and the silken banners and pennons borne by every individual who pretended to rank. These banners were in general fixed to the ends of the lances, and in the form of a cross, terminated by one or more points, and were variously ornamented with laurels, gold and silver fringe, tufts and tassels of silk, garlands of flowers, pictures of saints, figures of stars, and innumerable emblems and devices.* The lances were intended occasionally to be used as javelins ; but in general they were merely brandished, without being thrown from the hand ; while, for cutting and slashing, when at close quarters, the soldiers were provided with short broad-bladed

* Theodori Hoepingi, de Jure insig. tract. ; Simon Majolus ; De la Roque, &c.

swords. A large shield completed the accoutrements of these formidable figures, which was fastened to the left arm while fighting, but in travelling was usually slung about the neck.

Notwithstanding the grim appearance of Auxerre, the numbers, discipline, and appointments of the besieging army, rendered the eventual success of the expedition a matter of absolute certainty; and there was therefore nothing visible in the array of that warlike hurry and make-shift manœuvring which are observed among men who have just arrived to take a bout at hard and doubtful fighting. The few men on foot who attended the armament, consisting principally of servants, tent-pitchers, foragers, &c., known by the general name of sergeants, took their measures deliberately for the comfort of their superiors; the cavaliers employed themselves in the tourney, already an ancient amusement, striking stout blows with the blunted sword for the honour of the mistresses they had left behind at Paris; and King Robert, surrounded as usual by monks and beggars, bestowed alms, mortified the flesh, sang hymns, and even set them to music, some of which compositions remain in the church service, we believe, to this day.

It was determined that the arms of the besiegers should in the first place be turned against the holy chateau of St. Germain, which was looked upon as the key to the town; and although the ramparts had been strongly fortified by Count Landri and the monks, no doubt was entertained that it would yield at the first blow. This plan met the approbation of every one except Rapaton, who loudly exclaimed against its impiety. His voice, however, was drowned in the clamour of the chiefs; and even Robert, as the fateful moment approached, seemed instigated by a spirit altogether foreign to his nature.

"I war not with the Saint," said he. "God forbid that I should touch a bone of him! And even the monks, and the holy father their abbot, shall have free egress from a place doomed to destruction; but the rebellious slaves who have shut the gates in my face shall feel my vengeance; them will I smite with the edge of the sword!"

"The garnison," said Rapaton, "their swords and their shields,

the ramparts and the stones thereof; yea, the very soil of the earth, as far as falleth the shadow of the abbey—all are under the protection of the Holy Pontiff of God, St. Germain, and of the sixty saints whose sweet-smelling bones repose in the grottoes built by the brother of the Empress Judith, Conrad of blessed memory.* To carry a hostile brand even into the shadow of these holy walls is to offer battle to God and his saints. But it matters not; I see that thy heart is hardened, and he who is doomed must on. Alas! it is not for nothing that the anger of Heaven is thus kindled against thee. I thought the ever-blessed Virgin would not forget in a hurry the matter of the strange woman! Farewell, O King, delivered over to destruction! Farewell, ye tents of sin—farewell, ye banners of the devil, and rags of unrighteousness! I go to seek refuge in the house of the sixty saints—to hide myself, like a little child, in the skirts of the mantle of St. Germain—to take hold of the horns of the altar, that when the earth trembleth and the mountains are rent, my foot may not slip!" and so saying, he shook the dust of his sandals against the camp, threw away his shield, and, fixing a white pennon to his iron-shod pole, took the way to the abbey.

The King was struck for a moment with consternation and remorse; but bethinking himself that he was as innocent as a babe in the matter of the strange woman, he trusted that Rapaton might, in like manner, be deceived in his prophetic denunciations. Another trial, however, awaited him; for the beggar had not been an hour gone, before Odilon, the Abbot of Cluny, made his appearance to intercede in turn for the blessed St. Germain, or rather to thunder the threats of the Church against the impious King. Robert's heart, notwithstanding, was still hardened, and the abbot departed both in sorrow and anger.†

The monks, counselled by this priest, accepted the permission of the King to leave the abbey; and with the exception of eight individuals, who remained behind to guard the bones of the holy

* Diction. de la France, Art. Auxerre.

† Rodolph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temp.

confessor and wage battle with the enemy in prayer, took their way in sorrowful procession from the walls, headed by their abbot Hilderic.* Commands then were definitively given for the grand assault to take place on the following morning; and Robert that night retired to a sleepless pillow, the most wretched man in the whole army.

He could not rest; the air seemed thick and hot, and the moon light streaming into his tent assumed a thousand strange and ghastly forms. At length he sprang from his bed, drew aside the curtain, and looked out into the night. After gazing for an instant, he passed his hand before his eyes, uncertain whether he was awake or asleep; for the tall figure of the beggar, cased in his armour of straw, stood before him mute and motionless in the moonlight. At this sight, a sudden qualm of superstitious fear ran through the heart of the King, already shaken and unnerved; the hair began to rise upon his head, and drops of sweat to break upon his brow.

"Speak!" cried he at length, with a desperate effort. "Do thine errand, in the name of God! What dost thou want?"

"I come," said Rapaton solemnly, "from the graves of the saints and the martyrs. I come even as a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Repent, repent, for the vengeance of heaven is at hand!'"

"Thou sayest well," said the King, relieved by the living sound of his voice, "thou sayest well: a mass shall be heard in the morning by the whole army before we begin the assault."

"A mass! O thou who warrest with the saints! a sacrilege and a mockery! But I *will* speak—yea, King of France, I will do mine errand! To-morrow, I say unto thee, thou shalt be scattered, thou and thy men of war, and thy horses, and thy chariots, even like dust upon the wind and autumn leaves upon the whirlwind."

"Who will scatter us?" demanded the King impatiently: "the garrison is weak; the spiritual defenders gone; and we ourselves are mighty in numbers, and terrible in arms."

* Rodulph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temp.

"Who will scatter thee!" cried Rapaton. "Ho! ho! ho!" and his singularly wild and hollow laugh echoed among the tents. "The garrison weak! the spiritual defenders gone!—and sixty saints and martyrs ready to spring from their holy barracks, with St. Germain himself at their head!"

"Thou ravest!" said the King.

"It is thou who ravest," returned the beggar. "I have myself seen this night, in bodily presence, the blessed Pontiff of God; and the defence of the abbey is as completely arranged as the attack.

"Thou ravest!" repeated the King. "I say again, thou ravest! Why, what news is this? Has thou been at the wine? But come, give me a sign that thou art in thy senses. In what way will the blessed Pontiff appear? How shall I know that the dead saints are in arms against me—ha?"

"When thou descendest the hill half way, and art about to give the word to advance at full speed, it will come to pass that thou shalt hear the chanting of the mass rise wild and high above the sounds of war from the great altar of Saint Mary."

"Well, what then?"

"Then thou shalt see——"

"What shall I see?"

"Thou shalt see, thou shalt see——" repeated the beggar, moving away, while his voice sounded distant and indistinct.

"What shall I see? Speak!" cried the King, rushing after the retreating figure, and stumbling among the ropes and stakes of the tents. In another moment he gained an open area, where the moonlight shone as clear as day, but the beggar had vanished! The King rubbed his eyes and stared wildly around; but not a trace was to be seen of the bulky corporeal mass that but an instant before had stood between him and the moon—not a straw even of its strange garb was left to tell that there had passed Rapaton.

In vain Robert questioned the sentinels. The one nearest the spot was the Knight Melon, surnamed the Madcap, and he protested that not a worm could have passed him unobserved; all the

others declared the same thing, and the King at length, constrained to believe that what he had heard and seen was either a dream or an apparition, retired to his tent.

The next morning, when Robert went forth, a beautiful and stirring sight presented itself to his view. The troops were already under arms, and drawn out in battle array ; their armour glittered in the sun ; their banners and pennons floated in the breeze ; the horses shook their proud heads, neighed, and pawed the ground ; the horn rang merrily from post to post, and every individual of the lines seemed panting for action. The King himself was moved, and his heart stirred within him with the common bulldog instinct of the species which fixes our grasp upon the throat of an enemy. He called for his casque and cuirass, mounted his horse, and harangued the troops.*

At this instant Odilon, the Abbot of Cluny, stood forth, and again raised his voice against the impious expedition.† He poured the curses of the Church upon the heads of the assailants, and threatened them with defeat and dismay. Robert, in spite of his previous excitation, listened silent and awestruck ; and the "Woe ! woe ! woe !" of the holy man, as he retired, smote heavily upon his heart.

When he had descended the hill half way, he reined in his horse with an involuntary jerk, as the thought swept across his mind of the warning apparition of the night before ; and in spite of himself he listened for the sound of the chanting of that mass which was to be as the voice of the trumpet in the army of the saints. And the sound came ! With a wild and mournful swell, it rose into the air, shrill and high, above the thousand voices of war. The monarch grew pale as he listened, and fixed a gaze of expectant horror upon the abbey. The next moment a vapour was observed rising from the walls, both outside and in, and curling over the heads of the ramparts. The whole host of the assailants, who had begun to move forward without waiting for the command of the King, suddenly reined in their horses at the sight of this

* Rodolph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temp.

† Ibid.

phenomenon ; but their surprise was deepened into consternation, when at nearly the same instant a still denser cloud rose from the neighbouring river, and enveloped the whole building.*

"By the holy Virgin !" cried Melon, who rode near the King, in a voice of unfeigned wonder and alarm ; "*this* one at least is no joke. Awake, awake, my Prince ; there is no dishonour in flying from the Saints. Let us ride for our lives, or St. Germain and the sixty will be out upon us !" The words spread like wild-fire through the lines, "St. Germain is coming ! The Saints will be out upon us !" and Robert, fairly vanquished by the horror of his situation, turned round his horse and fled at full speed, followed by his whole army.†

When Constance first heard of the rout of the King, her joyful surprise was almost mingled with terror.

"What manner of man is this beggar Rapaton?" said she. "Surely he hath a devil !" The discomfited troops had no sooner returned to Paris, than she hastened to fulfil her part of the engagement, by uniting the hands of Melon and Adelaide ; and the King on his side was even more anxious to have the ceremony performed. This unity of feeling had the effect of softening the rancour which had prevailed between the two august parties ; and the splendid fête held on the occasion of the marriage, passed over in uninterrupted harmony.

Rapaton had not made his appearance since the interview he had had with the King, either in body or spirit, on that dismal night before the defeat ; but it was confidently believed that, on the present joyful occasion, he would not fail to assist. Constance more than once in the course of the evening sank into a reverie, and the King started and turned pale whenever the door was suddenly opened. Rapaton, however, came not ; he was never seen more. Melon soon after his marriage carried his lovely bride home to her native hills ; and although such was the rash and daring character of the Madcap that no man would have given at any time an hour's purchase for his life, he somehow or other continued to live long enough to become one of the greatest lords of Provence.

* Rodulph. Glaber. Hist. sui Temp.

† Ibid.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Twelfth Century.

A D 1100 —ABOUT this period the worship of images was introduced into the Catholic Church—a practice as old as the art of cutting stone, and an admirable means of fooling the ignorant

1108 —The domain of the kings of France at this epoch of feudality had dwindled pretty nearly to the circle of a private gentleman's estate ; and when Louis le Gros ascended the throne, he found himself master of an inheritance which extended no more than fifteen or twenty leagues round Paris. This monarch was perpetually at war with his unruly barons, and the latter were at war with any body who had a purse to defend. Success was pretty equally divided, except on the part of travellers ; and at one time it cost Louis three sieges to take a little paltry fortress

1124 —A war with the King of England, on a greater scale, ensued. The Emperor, being son-in-law of this Prince, took his part, and crossed the Rhine against France, when Louis, in terms of the feudal charter, convoked the great vassals of the Crown, who were bound to march under the royal standard against a foreign enemy, and mustered an army of two hundred thousand men. The Germans repassed the river, and the French might have fallen upon the Anglo Normans, but the nobles, unwilling to foster the royal power with success too liberally, returned home, and left the King without an army.

The most important event of this reign is the commencement of communes. Insurrections having taken place in some towns in the King's domain against the clergy and barons, their possessors, Louis, at war with every body at home and abroad, conceived the idea of putting it into the power of the towns to defend themselves. This, although his real policy, was too great a boon to his vassals to be given without an immediate equivalent, and he therefore *sold* them the right of electing magistrates, forming militia, and enclosing themselves with fortifications. It is true, they were still incapable of changing their place of abode, and even of marrying, without permission of their lord ; but they were thankful, and had cause to be so, for what they had obtained ; and thus by degrees a kind of alliance was formed between the people and their

feudal kings, which strengthened the hands of the latter against the nobles. Afterwards, this blow at feudality was followed up by the institution, in some cases, of an appeal against seignorial sentences, to *royal judges*.

1137.—Louis VII., surnamed *Le Jeune*, increased considerably the domain of the Crown by a marriage with the heiress of Aquitania and Poitou. Stung by his conscience for having burned a church (in which there happened to be thirteen hundred persons), he afterwards enlisted in a second crusade, at the call of St. Bernard. Having succeeded in committing sundry robberies on the highways between France and Palestine, he at length returned, and repudiated his Queen, who gave her hand and a third part of France to Henry Plantagenet, already the possessor of Anjou and Normandy, and afterwards King of England.

During the absence of Louis in the holy wars, the kingdom was governed by Suger, abbot of St. Denis, in quality of Regent. He is the first "Man of the People" mentioned in French history. He continued in this reign the wholesome plans he had commenced in the preceding one, for he had been minister likewise to Louis le Gros; but nothing great or permanent could be effected under a master at once so weak and so violent as Louis le Jeune.

The Latin and Tudesque tongues—the latter a dialect of Germany—were now fully molten into what is called the Roman, or Romance; which, polished by nearly seven centuries, is the French language of our day.

1180.—Philip II., surnamed *Augustus*, commenced his reign by robbing and banishing from Paris the only industrious class of his subjects, the Jews. He conquered in war the King of England, who possessed one half of France; and, assuming the cross with that Prince's successor, Richard Cœur de Lion, set forth for the Holy Land, to snatch Jerusalem from the hands of Saladin. The two Kings succeeded in capturing St. Jean d'Acre. When Philip returned, he took advantage of the absence of Richard to invade Normandy.

1200.—Having divorced his wife, according to royal fashion, he was excommunicated by the Pope, and the kingdom was put under interdict. Religious offices were ordered to be discontinued throughout the country, and the people were forbidden to eat meat, to speak, and to marry. Philip only laughed at what had made his predecessors tremble; and, in return for verbal injuries, he seized the temporalities of the bishops.

Another bold and statesmanlike blow was struck by this French Augustus. John Lackland, King of England, having murdered his young competitor, Arthur, was tried by his peers, as the vassal of France, and condemned to lose his French possessions, Normandy, Anjou, Tourraine, &c. The decree was put in force by Philip with an army; and thus the fragments into which the kingdom had been broken began to reunite.

Philip Augustus was the first French prince who established a standing army—a mighty engine, in whichever way it acts. In his time, it was a successful blow struck at feudality, that terrible hobgoblin which bestrode Europe

in her night of ignorance ; but afterwards it became still more fatal to the liberties of the people.

It was pretty generally believed, from an interpretation of the Apocalypse, that the world was to end in the year 1200, and many of the laity hastened to lay up for themselves treasures in Heaven, by bestowing their worldly wealth in religious foundations. Notwithstanding this, however, and the great increase of monastic orders, it may be said that the human mind made considerable progress in the twelfth century.



e Serf.

We will be revenged :—revenge : about,—seek,—burn,—fire,—kill,—slay,—
let not a traitor live.—SHAKSPEARE.

ONE day early in the year 1127, the city of Bruges presented a scene of extraordinary bustle. A single combat was to take place before the Court, on which, for some reason or other that nobody could define, the interests of the two most powerful families in the territory were supposed to hang. The combatants were Thancmar, Chatelain of Bourbourg, a favourite of the sovereign Earl, and Bouchard, nephew of the great and wealthy Prevôt of the Chapter of Bruges. The quarrel was altogether a private one; and, indeed, many people wondered that Charles, who had so justly earned his surname of the Good, should sanction on this occasion a practice which the wisest of the French princes had discontinued. The strangers who flocked to the city, inquired what concern the truly good Earl could have in such an affair, and by what singular fatality he and his tried friend the Prevôt should be thus arrayed against each other, with a pomp and circumstance which only attended the wars of rival kings.

Such questions were difficult to answer. It was mainly by the assistance of the Prevôt Bertulphe that Charles had mounted the throne of the earldom; for although his mother was a daughter of the House of Flanders, his father was a foreign prince, Canute, King of Denmark; and in such disjointed times the will of the late Earl Baldwin, his grandfather, unless enforced by the strong hand, would have been easily set aside. Bertulphe, moreover, through the course of a long reign, had been his tried and trusty counsellor;

and at the present moment, in power, wealth, and state, was the second of no one but the Earl himself. It may be thought Charles found cause of discontent even in the gigantic growth of such a subject, although this had waxed with the prosperity of the state itself; but at all events, however closely interwoven they might have been in political circumstances, there existed sufficient contrariety in the minds of the two men to engender distrust, if not animosity.

Charles, although perhaps the greatest man in Europe of his time, was the most humble and unaffected. He had rejected successively the crowns of Rome and Judea, offered to him as the most worthy, by his virtues and courage, to wear them; and occupied solely with the cares of his government, seemed desirous of stealing through the world without leaving a trace, except in the grateful remembrance of his people. Bertulphe, on the other hand, proud and overbearing, yet covetous of the applause even of those he despised, appeared in everything to be the very reverse of the Earl. No scion of a line of kings like his friend, and no inheritor of the titles and estates of nobility, his origin was lost in the obscurity rather of insignificance than antiquity, and his life seemed to be spent in a constant turmoil of the anxieties, jealousies, and heart-burnings which are the attendants of upstart power. In one solitary instance, however, Bertulphe was the advocate of the people—for the PEOPLE had by this time begun to exist, rising slowly from the mass of serfs and domestic cattle—while Charles, by some singular contrariety in the human character, was their determined enemy. And here it is necessary to offer some explanation; for the circumstances about to be recorded, which in their acted time set all Europe in a ferment, and filled the city of Bruges with warring princes, may be said to have had their rise in this difference of opinion between the Earl and his vassal.

Three years before a fearful famine had devastated Flanders, preceded by the usual signal of fate in that age, an eclipse of the sun. Whole villages were depopulated, and entire families swept from the face of the earth. Everything was in confusion; rank was

disregarded, the famishing serf saw in his famishing master only a fellow man; and the distinctions of society were swallowed up by the hunger of the people. When the scourge had at length passed by, it may be supposed that things did not at once subside into their former level. The serf having tasted of licence, may have wished at least for freedom; and the lord no doubt, after his hunger was appeased, busied himself in recalling into his domain the liberated bondsmen of the soil, and riveting anew round their necks the links of the feudal chain.

Charles the Good was one of the most active on this occasion. Having always himself been an indulgent master, he considered the desertion of his serfs as evidence of the vilest ingratitude; and, brought up in the prejudices of the time, he imagined it to be the duty of every man, whether free or servile, to remain in the situation in which he had been placed by Providence. By degrees, the pursuit of his feudal slaves, looked upon at first as a duty, became, in common parlance, a *hobby*; and in process of time, not satisfied with repairing the structure of society with the wrecks of the late tempest, he began to inquire curiously into the materials of the whole edifice. He found that, in former convulsions, whether political or natural, some individuals had contrived to slip their necks out of the chain and mingle unnoticed with the crowd. Some of the descendants of these knavish lovers of liberty, in their supposed capacities of freemen, had arrived at opulence and respectability; and even such men, as soon as the proofs of their families' original servility could be established, were dragged with unrelenting determination into the domain of Charles the Good. Nay, the Earl went still farther. In order to prevent persons in such a predicament from endeavouring to shelter themselves by matrimonial connexions, he made a law in his dominions, that any knight who could be proved, within a year after his nuptials, to have married the daughter of a serf, should lose caste and sink into the servile condition himself.*

* In the epoch of pure feudality, which may be considered to have extended from the usurpation of the House of Capet up to the commencement of Com-

Bertulphe, on the other hand, was shocked and disgusted by these arbitrary measures, which he endeavoured, in every way in his power, to thwart and neutralise. The haughty Prevôt became all on a sudden the advocate of freedom; and he who in his private dealings with society looked upon an inferior as one altogether different in the scale of being from himself, was willing to accord to him, in a political sense, the rights of a man and a brother. This contradiction is very common. It has been observed 'in the sternest times of republicanism as well as among the patriots of our own day; but the fact has nothing to do with the theory of liberty.

Ever since the introduction of this question into the counsels of the prince, a gradual estrangement was observed taking place between him and his vassal. Their greeting became more polite and more cold; the services of the feudal tenure were rigidly demanded, and barely and haughtily performed; and at length, so far had matters gone, that the proud Bertulphe was insulted by the offer of certain crown lands which had long been promised him, on condition of his complying with a feudal regulation seldom insisted upon, by crawling into the presence of his lord with a pack-saddle on his back, and humbly requesting him to mount! Nor were opportunities wanting in which the subject could retaliate upon his prince; and these were all eagerly seized by Bertulphe, whose wealth and power rendered him no contemptible rival even to his master. His two daughters were married to knights; his kinsmen and connections held the highest offices in the state; and so firmly, and so far had the roots of his family struck into the soil of Flanders, that many wondered where the shadow of his

munen under Louis le Gros, mentioned in the Historical Summary, the condition of the servile class presented no advantages over that of domestic cattle. A lord might strike, mutilate, and kill his serfs with impunity. They could not accumulate property; they laboured on certain days for their masters; they dared not remove without permission from their place of residence; and by the imposition of tallage, tolls, and taxes of all kinds, and seigneurial rights revolting to modesty and nature, they were degraded from their very rank as human beings.

roof-tree would stop. The strife between these two powerful men was carried on with such perfect civility, that the people could scarcely give any sufficing reason for the fact they *felt*, that there were two parties in the state. Those, notwithstanding, who were disgusted with the upstart insolence of Bertulphe, ranged themselves unconsciously on the side of the Earl; while such of the serfs as possessed some glimmerings of human pride, and all the desperate, the needy, and the bad, looked, without knowing why, for redemption at the hands of the Prevôt.

Affairs were in this state, when the quarrel took place between Thanemar and Bouchard, the nephew of Bertulphe. On the day of the duel Bruges was filled to overflowing, and in particular the street leading to the field of combat was so crowded that the processions of the rival knights, swelled by the feudal retainers of the two great houses, could scarcely pass. First came Bouchard and his adherents, glittering from head to foot in polished steel, and prancing along the living street like creatures of another mould from those among whom their barbs plunged so recklessly. So intense was the anxiety of the populace to obtain a view of one of the heroes of the day, that Bertulphe, who followed his nephew with a train of men-at-arms fit for a prince, had much difficulty in advancing; and at one place the impediment offered by the crowd was so great, that in the eyes of the haughty Prevôt it amounted almost to the nature of an insurrection.

The promoter of the disturbance appeared to be a very aged man, with hair and beard as white as snow, who persisted in pushing through the ranks of the people to gaze at the passing pageant.

"Back with thee, Philippe," said the bystanders—"back with thee, or they will ride over thee! Holy saints! who could have thought of a crazy bed-ridden man, more than a hundred years old, rising from a sleep that seemed the beginning of death, to run after a show! Drive him back, or he will be trampled—seize him neck and heel—away with him!"

"Let me pass," cried the old man; "touch not my grey hairs, if ye would escape a curse that ye all know blighteth where it

falls. I tell ye I have dandled him when a babe in these arms, I have sung him to sleep in his cradle by the cottage—said I cottage?—by the palace-door. Let me gaze upon him for the last time; let me sun myself, before I go hence, in the blaze of his prosperity: though cold, cold as the shadow of death, it will yet be bright and gladsome to the eyes of Philippe!" and the old man broke through the circle of his neighbours with a violence which threw him against the horse of the object of his interest.

"Back, dog!" exclaimed Bertulphe, with habitual sternness, "back!" and he caused his horse to plunge in such a manner, that Philippe was thrown down among the crowd severely hurt. The haughty Prevôt then, without condescending so much as to look at the effects of his manœuvre, put spurs to his steed, and began to prance forward as if charging the flying and stumbling bourgeois.

"Dog!" screamed Philippe, in the broken and tuneless treble of age, as soon as he had recovered breath—"dog!" and with almost preternatural strength he broke from his supporters, and rushed after the Prevôt. "Was it dog?" he continued, with maniac vehemence; "didst thou say dog? and to me! Oh viper! doomed to sting and then to be crushed, an hour will come, and a speedy one, when thou shalt remember that word! Long have I borne thy scorn—I who fondled thee even as a father!—and thy ingratitude—I who flung thee in the way of thy destiny, and thus made thee what thou art! But the time has arrived when endurance holds no longer—when the last fierce blow has been struck, which makes even the worm writhe up against his trampler. Dog! dog!—aye, that was it—assure thee it will stick! Thou shalt not hide thee on the very scaffold; for there it will follow thee! The growl will be in thy ear, and the teeth in thy flesh, and then"—and the old man, grinning and glaring, stretched forth his arms, and crooked his long, lean fingers in the attitude of a dog fastening on its prey—"and then thou wilt remember Philippe!" The crowd listened with horror to the mysterious denunciations of the ancient bourgeois, which they had learnt to think prophetic; and even Bertulphe appeared

to be constrained, by something like the force of sorcery, to stay his career. He gazed earnestly, and at last wildly, upon Philippe, and at one time seemed on the point of springing forward—some said to strike him to the earth, and some, to ask pardon of the seer; but controlling with habitual pride his emotions, whatever was their nature, he turned his horse, and plunged sullenly and sternly forward, when the old man, exhausted by his passion, fell back in the arms of the citizens.

The Prevôt did not enter the inclosure where the lists were commonly held, and which, for the present occasion, was surrounded with tents and temporary galleries for the spectators. On arriving at the spot, he seemed to be seized with a sudden thought, as if he had forgotten something; and, ordering his followers to enter and take their places, he turned his horse, and, attended only by two men-at-arms, galloped homewards by another route. He had no sooner reached his house than he ordered one of the varlets* to fly to the abode of Philippe, and bring the old man before him; and soon after, in the impatience of his feelings, he despatched a second messenger on the same errand, promising him a reward if he outstripped the former. He then set himself to pace up and down the room, with a restless and gloomy aspect, and seemed to await the return of his servants with an anxiety singularly disproportioned to the occasion.

"Ill-boding voice!" he muttered between his teeth. "When its first discordant scream fell upon my ear, my heart quaked, although I remembered not the tone. Surely his years have been extended beyond the common lot for the express purpose of

* Varlet, valleton, squire, and damoiseau are frequently used synonymously, although the last title belongs more particularly to the following century. They were not merely servants, in the modern acceptation of the word, being also aspirants to the profession of knight or man-at-arms. The *vaid* therefore, degenerate as he is, may be proud of his ancestral dignity.

In a house account of Philip le Bel (end of the thirteenth century), the three children of the King are called Varlets (La Roque de la Nobl.); and in Villehardouin, the son of the Emperor of the East is termed Varlet of Constantinople.

working my destruction ; if it be not that when he died the arch-enemy himself seized upon the deserted tenement of mortality, to rear it up again as a shape fit to thwart and affright me ! This comes of mercy, and remembrance of boyish feelings and fancies. Would I had slain him when my foot was on the first step of the ladder !” At this moment the noise of hasty steps was heard in the passage, and the first messenger burst breathless into the room—alone.

“How, slave !” cried Bertulphe, striding up to the man, and seizing him by the throat, while a glare at once of fear and fury illumined his swarthy eye. “Am I disobeyed ? Will he not come ? Why are you here alone ? Speak, ere I strike you to the dust !”

“He would not come,” said the messenger, his terror struggling with indignation ; “he could not, having obeyed the call of a still mightier master, Death.”

The Prevôt relaxed his hold, and a glow broke over his pale face.

“Are you sure of it ?” said he, in a low and tremulous voice. “Did you see him with your own eyes ? and was he dead—quite dead ?”

“Dead, cold, and stiff !”

“That is enough ; forget this bootless errand—or remember if you will ; for ’tis all one now ; hell itself cannot harm me ! Fellow, there is gold—away !” and when left alone, after listening for a moment to the receding steps in the passage, he broke out into a hoarse exulting laugh.

“Now I am secure !” exclaimed he, when his feelings had subsided far enough to admit of utterance ; “secure even from the shadows that haunt the dreams of aspiring greatness, and make our waking triumphs seem dearly purchased with our sleep of terror ! The spell is broken which seemed to chain together the two ends of my fortune ; and I shall no longer start in the midst of the banquet, and feel as if some sneering voice was about to demand, in hearing of the great, ‘What dost thou there ?’ This was the spectre that flitted before me in my almost royal path ;

and which, even after I believed the years of Philippe to have reached the extremest point of human existence, continued still, although more faint and unfrequent, to mock and threaten me. Here must I seek the origin of the gloom which has so long weighed upon my soul, and which, in the remembered superstition of my boyhood, I imagined to be a presentiment of some fatal and inevitable catastrophe. Away, fantastic shadows, for Bertulphe is safe in freedom and greatness!" He had not long indulged in feelings of exultation, when the second messenger returned.

"You are too late," said Bertulphe, "the man is dead; and yet there is gold for your pains. Away! I will to the lists. He is dead?" continued he, perusing with a start the man's countenance.

"Dead, cold, and stiff," replied the valet; "but I wished to mention to my Lord a circumstance—curious, to say the least of it."

"Say on," said Bertulphe, impatiently.

"Sir, the Chatelain of Bourbourg, he who is to fight to-day with the valiant Sir Bouchard, was by the old man's bedside when he died." The Prevôt turned pale, and withdrew his eyes hastily, as if to shun the observation of his servant.

"Well," said he, in a constrained tone, "what of that?"

"Philippe, my Lord, was thought to be a strange old man: nay, some people go so far as to say that he had more power in his tongue than a knight has in his sword."

"Then Thancmar sought him, perhaps," cried the Prevôt, eagerly, "to purchase a spell?"

"No, my Lord; Sir Thancmar sought him not at all. He was himself sent for."

"And when Philippe died, he pursued his way to the field of combat? Ah! that is my chance!" continued Bertulphe, turning away with a quick sigh of relief; "the secret, if he knows it at all, shall be buried in the Chatelain's grave. But I must have speech of Bouchard before the battle. Sirrah, did Sir Thancmar ride on to the field when the wizard died?"

"My Lord, I know not ; when I learnt these things that I have now mentioned, I came straight here to declare them."

"To the lists—to the lists ! Who waits ? My horse !"

"My Lord," said another servant, entering hastily, "there are strange tidings from the field of combat. The valiant Sir Bouchard, they say, has entered the lists and made proclamation by the heralds, and as yet no enemy has appeared to answer the challenge." While he was yet speaking, another, fraught with news, burst into the room.

"My Lord," said he, "strange tidings from the lists ! The valiant Sir Bouchard, having waited for some time for a reply to his challenge, has been at length answered by a herald on the part of Sir Thancmar, that he, the Chatelain of Bourbourg, refuses to fight, on terms of knightly equality with a SERF !"

"Thunder of heaven !" cried the Prevôt, "is it so ? But this is madness. Bouchard is as noble as the Earl himself.—Sirrah, did the knave-herald say aught of me ?"

"Of you ? What, of my Lord ! Holy saints ! he would have been torn to pieces, were he fifty times a herald !"

"Ay, ay," cried all the retainers at once, "the people would have torn him to pieces !"

"Follow me, then, to the lists," exclaimed the Prevôt, "and we shall see who dares insult the house of Bertulphe !" He had hardly mounted on horseback, however, when half the population of Bruges, knights, squires, and bourgeois, men, women, and children, appeared rushing tumultuously towards the house.

"Tell me, Sir Prevôt," said Bouchard, riding fiercely up to him, "am I—your son-in-law—a serf ? Answer me, yea or nay."

"You are no serf, my son," replied Bertulphe, "you are as noble as the Earl."

"That am I, I know, in my own person and lineage," said Bouchard ; "but the question is of what I am in my relationship with you. The year is not out since my marriage with your daughter ; and by the law of Flanders, if you are servile, as is alleged by Thancmar, I too am a serf. Answer me, in a word, what are you —a freeman or a slave ?"

"Ay, answer! answer!" cried the crowd around, with one voice. Bertulphe paused for an instant; and then, riding into the midst of the populace——

"Friends and fellow-citizens," said he, "is it of me, Bertulphe of Bruges, that you ask such a question?—of him who has stood so long in the breach, and fought single-handed the battles of freedom? My own individual interests are as nothing on an occasion like this. It may be that with one word I could escape myself from danger, and vindicate the honour of my family; but individual preservation and ancestral dignity I consider to be not worth a thought, in a case so fraught with public importance. Am I free? you ask me; I answer, Yes, because I am a man! I acknowledge no other test. When my eyes first opened upon the world, the light of day was showered upon me as bounteously as if I had been a prince; the blessed air of heaven came wooingly to fan my brow; and the music of woods and waters fell sweetly on my ear, as it arose to welcome the arrival of a new lord of the earth, and coheir of immortality. All things, animate and inanimate, proclaimed my freedom. It was a boon which I received from God and Nature, and which I will only surrender with my life. The time has now come when this fateful business must be decided—when custom and right must stand in hostile opposition; and I offer myself to lead the forlorn hope of freedom. Let all who hate tyranny and love honour watch the fate of the question that has been agitated this day. Be calm, yet firm; and above all things, be united. In the day of the struggle, whether of arms or reason, look all of you to me for the signal; and let the password in your ranks be 'Liberty!' and the answer—'Bertulphe!'" The people, during the progress of this speech, seemed confounded; they looked in one another's faces in doubt and almost terror; but catching by degrees the enthusiasm, feigned or real, of the orator, they closed their ranks eagerly, but noiselessly round him; and at length, when he had ceased to speak, their simultaneous shout arose like a peal of thunder—"Bertulphe and Liberty!" Those of the nobler classes, on the other side, who were but a handful compared to the populace, had at first half drawn their swords at so frantic an attack

upon their ancient privileges ; but, conscious of the inability of their number to withstand the tide of popular fury, if its sluices were once opened, they retired indignant and threateningly, amidst what seemed the war-cry of the citizens. Bertulphe and Bouchard then withdrew into the Prevôt's house ; and the people, separating into knots, discussed the momentous topic thus brought so suddenly before them ; and on retiring to their houses, carried into the remotest quarters of the city an agitation which was not speedily to subside.

A long and stormy conference ensued between Bertulphe and Bouchard ; but the latter, however, was at length persuaded that the interests of his father-in-law were his own. The truth could not be disguised. Bertulphe was originally of a servile family, and by talent and boldness had raised himself to a station which it was forbidden by the laws for one of that class to occupy. On this fatal day, the only living depository of the secret, besides himself, had been his foster-brother, Philippe, whom in his rising fortunes he had neglected and shunned, and who, in almost the last moments of reason and of life, goaded to desperation by an insult offered unwittingly in the habitual wantonness of power, had thus taken a deep and terrible revenge. The noble and knightly Bouchard, linked by the chains of matrimony to fortunes so desperate, after looking for a moment with rage and terror into the abyss of degradation which yawned at their feet, at length fiercely joined hands with his friend and destroyer, and they both swore that, if swept from their footing, it should only be by a torrent of blood. It was determined that, in the first instance at least, their bearing should be bold and open, and that on this day, notwithstanding what had occurred, Bouchard should attend the banquet of the Earl, to which he had been invited, look his enemies in the face, and watch from what quarter the expected blow should come.

The hour of the banquet arrived, announced by the blast of a horn,* and the Knight, attended by a princely retinue, made up

* This was called "Corner l'eau ;" because the guests invariably washed their hands before sitting down to table. The basin and towel were presented

of the dependents of both houses, took the way to the palace. Sir Bouchard appeared to be an object of much curiosity as he moved along ; some of the people greeted him with acclamations ; but by far the greater number gazed on him in silence, as if determined to wait the event. He was received at the palace in silence, but without any show of disrespect ; and when he entered the banquetting hall, it seemed as if he brought with him some chilling influence which froze the limbs and silenced the voices of the guests. When the ceremony of washing the hands had been performed, the company sat down to table ; and the squires, flourishing their carving-knives, put forth their hands as if to the attack of the various dishes which encumbered the board. But a pause ensued. Every one seemed to expect that something out of the common routine was to happen ; and the company looked at one another, as if inquiring whether they were calmly to submit to the dishonour of eating with an alleged serf. Bouchard, in the mean while, sat eyeing his neighbours with a fierce and jealous look, and treasuring carefully up in his memory every glance of disdain or hostility that met his observation.

At length a herald, entering the room, marched with grave and solemn pace to where Sir Bouchard sat ; and bending over, cut the table-cloth before him. The guests rose tumultuously at this signal, and all shrunk away from the dishonoured Knight. The victim himself, overpowered by the horror of his situation, sat alone by the table for some moments, while burning drops of perspiration coursed down his face, and blinded his eyes ; but, suddenly starting up, he threw a glare of fury around, and rushed out of the room.

Bertulphe, up till the moment when he heard of this decisive step on the part of the Earl, had half hoped that the threatened storm would blow over. He could scarcely believe that the whim

to ladies by squires or young pages, and to the prince by his chamberlain. After the repast, they washed a second time. The privilege of *Corner l'eau*, it should be observed, in an age so jealous in its distinctions, was accorded only to the great.

of Charles the Good could go to such a length of insanity as to make him stretch forth the hand of feudal right against an individual so wealthy, so powerful, and so well connected as himself. What a crisis had now arrived ! One day a mighty lord, the rival of his prince ; and the next, a wretch, cut off even from the sympathies of his kind—a Serf ! “ Never ! ” cried Bertulphe. “ If I sink at all, it shall be into the grave of honour ; and the loftiest towers of Flanders shall be kindled for my funeral torches ! ” The anticipated blow was quickly struck ; and the lordly serf was commanded in due form to return into the domain of his chief :* in other words, to lay aside the trappings of his splendour—which had become the very heart-strings of the base-born Bertulphe—to grovel at the feet of him who had so lately been his equal and his rival, and to rank himself, in point of station and utility, with the horse, and the ox, and the ass, whose value is estimated by the quantum of their labour, and the blindness of their obedience.

It might have been a question with a casual observer which of the two victims felt the more keenly at the prospect thus suddenly opened out to them. Sir Bouchard, bred up in all the prejudices of his rank, and his heart so twisted round with the chains of habit, that these might have appeared to be as much part and parcel of his character as the thews and sinews of his body were of the animal machine, shuddered to the centre as he found himself within a grasp which seemed tearing away his very vitals. His right hand instinctively clasped his sword, while the other clung with a death-grip to the pennon of his house and knighthood ; and when he spoke his voice came forth in the tones of one in an agony of physical pain. Bertulphe, on the other hand, deeply agitated before, as soon as the mandate reached him, became as calm as death. The web of his ambition was about to be torn into pieces smaller and thinner than the film of the morning, and scattered like a cloud upon the winds of heaven. The fruits of a

* Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon. This work contains a minute account of the whole transaction. It was written in 1130 ; and its author was either a citizen of, or a resident in, Bruges at the time.

lifetime of care and anxiety, of struggling and buffeting, and cringing and creeping by turns—of painful watching and troubled slumbers—of self-denial—of crime itself, were about to be ravished from his eyes. Till lately, he could not be said to have lived, but in the expectation of living; and now, when the gates of that glorious existence had been thrown open to his view by the spells which only the great and the deep-minded know how to use, the whole was about to vanish like a dream!

He wandered through his dwelling, as if to gaze for the last time upon the splendour from which he was to be dragged in order to be cast upon a dunghill. He feasted his eyes upon the rich economy of his household, which imitated the state of kings. Disdaining even the candelabras and candlesticks of gold and silver which were scattered in profusion around, his feasts were illumined by wax flambeaux held in the hands of men.* Minstrels enlivened his luxurious revels with their lays. The atmosphere of his private chamber was loaded with the aroma of cinnamon and ginger;† and cooled in summer by pages who agitated the air with peacock's feathers; his pillow was perfumed with violet, and his morning ablutions performed in rose-water and electuary.‡

It was not in despondency, however, that Bertulphe wandered through the scenes of the enchantments of his ambition. His tread every moment became firmer though not louder; his lips met with a fiercer compression, while his voice was calm and resigned; and although his face was pale, it was not the paleness of fear or grief, but of passion and deep resolve.

In the meantime the proceedings of the Earl went on; but in that age it was necessary that every cause, whether of right or wrong, should be backed by armed power. Thancmar, the enemy of Bouchard, was only too happy to embrace an opportunity which either honour or cowardice had caused him to forego on the day of the intended combat; and at the head of a body of his adhe-

* It was considered a clever joke to make these unhappy slaves of feudality hold the flambeaux till the boiling wax streamed down their hands.

† Fabliau of *Le Paradis de L'Amour*.

‡ *Lai de Courtois*.

rents, assisted by those of the Earl, he attacked the Château of Bouchard, and burnt it to the ground.* The same night, when Bertulphe was sitting alone, plunged in meditation, his son-in-law suddenly burst into the room, pale, bloody, and aghast.

"What! so soon?" cried the Prevôt, starting up in his dream. "Are we besieged? Has the Earl come to demand his serfs at the point of the lance? What ho! my friends, my kinsmen, my vassals—to arms! to arms!" and, throwing open his scarlet cloak, he drew with one hand a sword, and with the other a dagger.

"Peace! old man," said the Knight; "the spoiler is gorged even to fulness for the present; and if you have the courage to die in harness, you have time enough to buckle it on. For me, they may kill me as they list, for I have just sufficient strength and boldness left to die. They have butchered my people like so many wild beasts; they have sacked the ancient home of my family, and I myself ran away by the light of the burning pile."

"That is good—that is as it should be!" said Bertulphe, while his eyes were lighted up with a strange glare. "We must find you another house, my son, after first quenching the flames of your old one with the blood of its destroyers."

"Go to—go to: you know not what you say; the odds are against us, fearfully, overwhelmingly. Charles is beloved by the besotted citizens, and esteemed by all Europe. We have no numbers for defence, not to talk of attack,—and no walls to stead us in the place of men. Your wits, Bertulphe, have been overturned by a shock so sudden and severe. Go, wriggle, and dig, and mine, as you were wont; scoop yourself a hole to crawl out by, were it even into the ditch; for me, I am no serf, save by contamination,—I was born noble and free, and so will I die!"

"Bouchard," said Bertulphe, "you taunt me with my prudence, and I receive it as praise; but, believe me, the prudence which does not know how to be bold at great junctures—nay, daring even to seeming phrenzy—is unworthy of the name. The people love their masters? Granted: but the love of a nation is as

* Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon.

as I do: his trial is already over, and the sentence, suggested both by the principles of self-preservation and justice, only remains to be put into execution. The deed is an illegal one, I own; but it is so only because the victim is beyond and above the law. There is scarcely a lord of you all who does not think it necessary to go through some formal and public ceremonies before he hangs his vassal; and that we, in pursuing an enemy of freedom and civilization, assemble in the dead of the night, and choose for the hour of punishment the obscurity of the dawn, is owing, not to any fault of ours, but to the circumstances which, in so wretchedly constituted a state of society, render publicity impossible.*

“But it is necessary that, in adventuring on this deed, we consider, in the first place, whether there is any probability of its being done with safety to ourselves; and, in the second place, whether it is likely that the results of its accomplishment shall be those that we desire. My friends! he who reckons on the effects of suddenness and determination in great political convulsions, as being anything short of what is commonly called miraculous, knows nothing of the nature of popular opinion. The tyrant will be no sooner dead than all men, not in the secret of the combination, will stare aghast at one another. Then our emissaries will go abroad among the multitude, to stir their hearts with hopes of better days and milder laws—to intimidate some with reports of the universality of the conspiracy, and the aid and instigation of foreign princes, and to seduce others by bribes and promises. Then the serfs will be manumitted throughout the territories of the town; and thus a vast accession of physical strength be obtained. The knights and nobles, when they observe the temper of the times, will dismount

* This involves apparently, but not really, an anachronism; for in the twelfth century the wildest theories of liberty began to get abroad. The policy of the king, in permitting the establishment of communes, and the extension, if it should not rather be called the creation, of the peerage, caused a wide rupture between the ancient nobility and a great part of the chivalry on the one side, and the people on the other; and inquiries were thus originated into the most sacred mysteries of political society.

from their high horses, and each one will be eager to secure to himself a part in the new government. But the arrangement of this must remain in the hands of those who boldly planned and bravely executed the deed ; and on this, of course, will depend the results we are doubtless all anxious to obtain, as individuals desirous of serving their country with honour and advantage to themselves.—Have I said well, Sirs? Are you content? Sir Bouchard—Sir Gautier?”

“By the mass ! answered Gautier, “you have spoken like a prophet. Go on, for I will follow you.”

“We are all yours !” said Bouchard.

“All—all !” repeated the others. Bertulphe then drew his sword, and each of the conspirators taking hold of the blade, bound himself by a solemn and terrible oath to do the deed, and to be true and loyal to the others. The hour of the dawn was now at hand ; and the intervening time was spent by these desperate men in plotting the details of their crime.

That night, as we are informed by the chronicles of the time, was passed by the Earl of Flanders in a state of strange anxiety.* In vain he tossed to and fro on his restless bed—sleep was far from his eyelids. It seemed as if the sounds from that dark and lonely house had been able to reach his heart ; for at times he started, and crossed himself, and breathed an invocation for aid against the bad spirits of the night. Perhaps, in those hours of solemn gloom, when the world was at rest, and the still small voice within could be heard in the silence, some thoughts of corresponding peace flitted across his soul. Perhaps, even in the midst of the prejudices of his age and station, he accused himself of selfishness—of barbarity in the prosecution of claims, that, however legalized on earth by force and habit, can have no place in the eternal justice of Nature. Perhaps even the thought recurred to him of the time when Bertulphe was his friend and benefactor ; and he may have resolved, that if a new day was afforded to him on the earth, to imitate the mercy of the Creator, by extending

* Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon.

forgiveness to his creatures. These suppositions are not improbable, from the general character of the Earl; but no man knows whether they are correct.

The dawn at last came—the dawn of Wednesday, the second of March, eleven hundred and twenty-seven, and Charles the Good, blessing the welcome light, started from his bed, on which he had neither slept nor rested, and summoning the officers of his household, prepared to go forth to offer up his prayers in the great church of St. Donatien,* close by the palace.†

The usual obscurity of the dawn was increased by a thick mist which covered the face of the earth, so that no object was discernible even at the length of a lance.‡ Charles, however, with Thancmar, the Chatelain of Bourbourg, and some other knights, arrived in safety at his destination, and entered the tribune, an inclosed gallery situated in the body of one of the towers of the church, where his devotions were usually performed.§ From this lofty situation the nave of the church presented the appearance of a sea, when there is not light enough to separate distinctly to the vision the air from the water; and in the distance the tapers on the high altar were like lights dimly gleaming on the opposite shore. Sometimes, as an early worshipper passed below, lighting his steps with a torch, there might have been observed a few undefined figures gliding silently along on either side; and by and by several men were seen ascending to the gallery. These men were dressed in dark cloaks, drawn closely round them, as if to defend them from the cold, and their hats were slouched over their eyes.

* Archbishop of Rheims.

† Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon. It seems not improbable, from the description, that there was a connecting passage between the palace and the church; but the unpractised pen of the chronicler has not succeeded in conveying very clear ideas of the localities of his history.

‡ Galbert, in Vit. Carl. Bon.

§ It is scarcely possible to understand what, or where, this *tribune* was; and the reader who takes an interest in the story, is therefore referred to the authorities: Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon.; Suger, the foundling-minister of Louis le Gros, and Philip I. in Vit. Ludovici Grossi regis; and the *Chroniques de Saint Denis*, otherwise called the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.

The tribune was entered by two doors on opposite sides, and the muffled figures gathered round both these entrances, like strangers attracted by curiosity to witness the devotions of a sovereign prince.

The Earl, in the mean time, was engaged in reciting the Pater-noster, which he did aloud, and with great fervency. When he had almost reached the close, one of the muffled spectators stepped so suddenly in, that he turned his head and paused; but presently he concluded the prayer, with an emphatic Amen.

"Amen!" repeated the stranger, and his deep voice echoed through the church. Charles started, for he knew the tone, which rang, no doubt, like a death-knell in his ears. The next moment Bertulphe drew a naked sword from beneath his cloak, and plunged it into the heart of the Earl of Flanders.

"Hold! that is my victim!" cried one of his companions, as the furious old man was about to strike at another—"Vengeance! vengeance! for I am Bouchard;" and he cleft the skull of his enemy Thancmar in twain. These two murders were committed in the same minute, and they served as a signal to the other conspirators for an indiscriminate massacre of the Earl's attendants.

The consternation in the church, and finally throughout the town, at crimes so gigantic, so unparalleled in the history of human daring, exceeds description. The darkness of the morning added to the confusion; and through the mist, which the aiding powers of hell themselves appeared to have drawn round the earth, each man appeared like a spectre to his neighbour. That a few isolated individuals could have conceived and executed a project so wild, never entered into the head of any human being; the people looked at one another to watch, even in the actions of their most intimate associates, the breaking out of this so mysterious and well-planned insurrection; and, when the clang of the great bell, which was rung as an alarm by the monks, was heard booming through the fog, the astonished citizens rushed to the church to save themselves from danger, by a timely submission to the conquerors. Everything occurred precisely as Bertulphe had

predicted, and in one day the assassins were masters of the town of Bruges.

When the necessity for action was over, however, as if paralyzed by the horrors they had gone through, the conspirators seem to have stood still. Whether any plan really existed for changing the form of government, it is difficult to say; but if it did, the counsels were probably too much perplexed, owing to the multitude of conflicting interests, for any steady line of operations to be commenced. It was necessary, nevertheless, to bury the body of the murdered Earl; a circumstance, it would appear, of more terror than that by which he had been deprived of life. Charles had been so much beloved by his subjects, that it was greatly feared some dangerous commotion might occur at the funeral; for the "generous people" are much more capable of what may be called the poetry of sentiment than of true feeling. The Abbot of Gand was therefore offered a bribe to carry away the remains privately, and bury them in his own monastery; and accordingly he made his appearance with a train of assistants, and proceeded quietly to remove the ghastly ruins of mortality.

The affair, however, was not set about so secretly but that some report got abroad of what was going forward; and the people, who had submitted calmly to the murderers, were eager to shed their blood in defence of the senseless body. It appeared to be a matter of more consequence than all the rest that had happened, whether Charles the Good should be buried at Gand or at Bruges. The monks more especially felt the injustice of being deprived of the bones of "the Martyr," whom they already thought of canonizing as a saint; and when at length the strangers came actually to lay hands upon so sacred an article of their property, they broke into open insurrection, rang the alarum-bell, and called upon the people to save the temple from profanation. The conspirators were overawed; they shuddered as they read in the fierce eyes of the multitude the insecurity of the tenure by which they held life and power, and at last consented to the demand that their victim should be buried where he had been slaughtered. The body was carried back to the tribune; and it is said that Bertulphe, who

attended in his robes as *Prevôt* of the chapter, wept when he looked upon it.*

The Earl was dead, and Bertulphe was—no serf. The latter may have wept, but it could scarcely have been with compassion or regret. His thoughts, as he stood there, silent and abstracted, reverted, no doubt, to the history of his past life, as the thoughts of men usually do at any great epoch in their existence. The most striking circumstance that presented itself to his mind's eye in the survey, was the minuteness of the incident which had led to results so important and so calamitous. The threats of Philippe rushed back upon his heart like so many daggers. "You shall not hide yourself, even on the scaffold!" cried the old man. "From what? Was this dog—this rending and gnawing fiend with which he had been menaced, anything more than a metaphor, alluding to the sense of guilt and horror which should haunt him to the last? Was Philippe himself a maniac or a prophet?" A thousand similar questions rushed across his soul; and when the cortège began to move to the place of interment, Bertulphe started, and looked round like a man awakening from a trance.

The circumstances attending the funeral convinced the friends of the late sovereign and of transmitted authority, that the insurrection was by no means so formidable as had been supposed; and the Chamberlain of the Earl, at the head of a body of knights, plunged suddenly into the town, and before the confusion caused by so unexpected an attack had subsided, succeeded in slaying many of the adherents of Bertulphe. This exploit determined the question as to the real force of the conspirators. The citizens, almost to a man, deserted a cause, the strength of which they found, with surprise, depended upon their support; and Bertulphe and his associates, left to themselves, instead of thinking of flight or surrender, shut themselves into the château, and commenced one of the most extraordinary defences recorded in the history of war.

The news of the murder, in the meantime, went abroad on all

* Galbert, in *Vit. Carol. Bon.*

sides—not in the ordinary mode of conveyance, but carried, as was imagined, by the demons themselves, who had seduced their victims into sin, and now betrayed them to punishment. The whole circumstances were known, it is said, at London and at Paris, before an express could have reached the frontiers of Flanders. The sensation created through all Europe was immense. Nothing was heard but sighs of pity and threats of vengeance. Individual knights, from all quarters, buckled on their armour, leaped on their horses, and spurred towards the scene of the massacre; battalions were mustered to avenge the wrongs which sovereign authority had sustained in the person of the Earl; the King of France, the Duke of Normandy, and other princes of inferior note, put themselves on the march at a day's notice; and Bertulphe, from the high tower of the *château*, might have imagined that he saw the world rising in arms against him, and crowding round his devoted fortress.

A strong and lofty wall surrounded the *chateau* of St. Donatien,* including also in its circle the house of the *Prevôt*. The dwelling-house of the Earl adjoined; and this again was attached to his *château*. The besieged thus had various points of refuge in their power. If driven from the Earl's *château*, they might make a stand in the dwelling-house; if beaten there, they could retire to that of the *Prevôt*—and from thence successively to the refectory, the cloisters, and the church. This is the secret of a defence which would otherwise have seemed nothing less than miraculous. Instead of the original roof of timber, which had been burnt, the church was covered with a handsome dome of tiles and bricks; on the west, a strong and lofty tower rose over all; overlooking two smaller towers; and the high walls were furnished with turrets and an extensive gallery.

The place, it will be seen, if well garrisoned, was susceptible of

* It should be remembered, that in these days, when churchmen fought both with the arms of the flesh and the spirit, the churches were as strong and regular fortresses as the *châteaux* of the nobles. The abbot of a monastery, in fact, frequently acted as the *chatelain* of his spiritual *château*, as it was called.

defence ; and the deficiency in the number of Bertulphe's party was amply made up for by the desperate circumstances in which they were placed. It seemed, indeed, as if all they desired was to live well during the short time they were to live at all : and in this, at least, they were abundantly gratified, by the rich stores which they found in the houses of the Earl and Prevôt. A treaty of surrender, it is true, was once proposed by Bouchard and the others, but this, apparently, was only for the purpose of gaining time ; for it declared that Bertulphe was wholly innocent, and stipulated for no greater punishment to the actual murderers than banishment from the state. It was of course rejected indignantly. The victims, few in number, were fairly in the toils ; and the assailants consisted of vast multitudes of armed men, who hungered and thirsted for their blood.

It was first attempted to scale the walls by means of immense ladders, the lower of which were sixty feet long and twelve broad, and the upper still longer, but more narrow. The stones and arrows of the besieged, however, who rushed in a body wherever those were planted, completely baffled the attempt. Some young men, next, impatient of the dishonour of forming individuals of a mighty multitude who where thus kept at bay by a handful of men, constructed smaller and lighter ladders, and placing them suddenly against the wall, attempted to take the place by surprise. One of them gained the very summit of the wall on a single ladder ; but the vigilance of the besieged was not asleep. He was seized, just as he touched the ridge, and dashed back among his companions, a mangled corpse. A breach was then attempted to be made in the wall, but with no greater success ; the little garrison were present everywhere ; they had built up every door in the edifice with stones and earth—all except one small postern, by which they received their supplies ; and they continued to watch the operations of their enemies with the eagerness of men who knew that their lives depended upon the event.

The weather now became bitterly cold, and both besiegers and besieged were fain to relax a little in their exertions in the open air. Several of the garrison had hitherto been constantly stationed

in the court into which the door above-mentioned opened; but now, in the kind of tacit truce which the severity of the season had introduced, they contented themselves with only occasionally visiting the post to see that all was well. This fatal negligence did not pass unobserved. Long and slight ladders were planted secretly by the besiegers against the wall of the court; and when the unsuspecting garrison were defending themselves against the cold within doors, a still bitterer enemy stole into their stronghold. The door was broken open almost instantaneously: the shouts of the scaling party told their friends without of their success; and in a moment a rush, as if of the whole besieging armies, took place, and the court and inner buildings were filled with foes.

Bertulphe and his men grappled like wild beasts disturbed by the hunters in their lair. They disputed every inch of ground, and fought their way backwards into the church. Here, for a time, they kept their enemies at bay; they showered down lighted torches, and consumed the houses surrounding the edifice, thus destroying every possibility of secret access to their retreat; and proved themselves, in every manner, determined to die sword in hand. The various compartments of the cathedral, however, yielded one by one to the terrific odds opposed to their defenders. The doors of the refectory were broken open, and the conspirators took refuge in the cloister; from thence they were driven into the body of the church; and, finally, into the lofty and almost isolated gallery called the Tribune.

Here was a turn of destiny sufficient to startle the boldest! Into the *tribune*, where the blood of their victim was hardly yet dry, and where the air must have been thick with shapes and shadows of terror, the assassins were driven as to a last but brief refuge. The church was filled with their pursuers, their faces turned up to them, half in rage, half in savage mockery, their eyes blazing with revenge, and their voices, as they rolled along the vaulted roof, resembling the inarticulate howls of the wolf-dog when within a single bound of his foe and prey.

But even here the courage of despair was for a while triumphant; and the conspirators, who did not fight for gain, but

for hours of life, gained the prize for which they contended. Yet the hearts of two of them—and but of two—failed them at this juncture. These were Bertulphe and Bouchard. Their enemies they could have still braved, but not *there*. The case was different when Bertulphe *wept* upon this spot. Now he stood confessedly upon the brink of eternity, and his eyes were fixed in horror, not on his executioners, but on those who, to his mind's vision, appeared waiting to receive him when the blow of human justice should be dealt. A singular instance of generosity was at this moment exhibited by the rest of the conspirators.

"There is no man of us certain," said they to Bertulphe and Bouchard, "whether he may die with sword in hand, or be taken alive and perish by the hand of the executioner. If the latter fate be yours—you who were the planners and leaders of this enterprise—there is no invention of torture, which the invention of man or fiend can conceive, that will not be put in requisition to make your death long and bitter. The night is at hand—our last night in this world!—and the torches will burn dimly in the damp fogs of our charnel-house. Steal round by the end of the gallery, where we will undo the barricades, and, by means of this rope, we will lower you down the wall. If you descend upon the spears of your enemies, you will meet an easy death; and if you escape, why you may yet live long enough to take a bloody vengeance for the death of your comrades!" So said, so done. Bertulphe and Bouchard bade adieu, with tears, to the brave and generous companions of their crimes. They were lowered down the wall with a cord—they gradually disappeared, as they descended, in the gloom—and the line swung burthenless.

The next morning the attack was renewed on the conspirators; but a startling difficulty presented itself to the besiegers. The lofty tower in which the tribune was situated might have been pulled down, it is true, and this was the only way, it appeared, of speedily reaching its defenders; but in its fall, from the peculiar nature of its situation, the ruins would infallibly crush friends and enemies together. In addition to this, the principal leaders of the insurrection were already *slain*, and the two men against whom

alone the war might be said to have been waged had escaped. Under these circumstances, the King of France, to whom, since his arrival, had been entrusted the conduct of the enterprise, either moved to admiration by the extraordinary gallantry of the defence, or impelled by some motive of personal or political convenience, offered terms of surrender to the conspirators.* These men, twenty-seven in number, were thus suddenly, and, as they imagined, miraculously saved; nor did they ever afterwards dream that it was to the performance of an act of generosity that they owed their lives.

Bertulphe and Bouchard met a very different fate. The latter, depending upon the fidelity of some friends in the town, walked boldly into the midst of the houses as soon as he reached the ground, calculating for his chance of safety on the darkness of the night. He was so far correct, and reached the house of one of his vassals unharmed; but with so great a horror had the murder of the Earl inspired almost all classes of the people, that the very man who before would have cheerfully shed his blood, drop by drop, for the preservation of his master, delivered him up to his enemies. This act of equivocal virtue, however, was not performed without a mental struggle, which lasted for several days; at the end of which time Bouchard was dragged from his retreat, and exposed upon a lofty wheel, a mark for the arrows and darts of the savage multitude, who were not otherwise repressed in their exercise, except by a caution not to kill too speedily. The order was given in vain; for the accomplishment of the execution was undertaken by the ministers of another master. A flight of birds of prey swept down and fastened upon the body yet quivering with life, and Bouchard yielded up his soul to its account.†

Bertulphe made for the country, although with scarcely any definite idea of escape. He threw off his cloak and armour, that he might fly the lighter, and in a piercingly cold night, and in utter darkness, pursued his journey through brakes and jungles, and

* Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon.

† Suger, de Vita Ludovici Grossi regis; Chroniques de Saint Denis.

half-frozen marshes. When daylight came, he hid himself among some bushes, and lay there in a state that could hardly be termed life, till the next nightfall. And yet he slept, and dreamed; and awoke, praying to God that he might never sleep more if such dreams were to be the condition. He pursued his journey, fainting ever and anon as he went; but continually rousing himself up again, as if urged on by some fiend to finish his destiny. The voice of old Philippe was in his ears—"Thou shalt not escape! thou shalt not escape!" and Bertulphe would gladly, eagerly have looked forward to the scaffold as a place of refuge, but for the undefined horror which the predictions of the prophet, as he had now proved himself to be, had thrown around it.

When daylight came, he found himself suddenly near a town, which he knew to be the town of Ypres; and the wretched fugitive would have turned away, and sought again the woods and wilds of Nature. But at the instant the furious howl of a dog behind him smote upon his ear; and, oppressed with the images of horror which crowded into his soul, connected with the prediction of Philippe, and haunted, above all, by an idea of uncontrollable destiny, he sprang madly forward. He was recognized and surrounded; his clothes were torn in strips from his mangled body; a halter was twisted round his neck, and he was thus dragged to the public market-place by the yelling populace.* A gibbet was then erected, and the miserable wretch drawn slowly up by the neck, the rope being fixed in such a manner as completely to avoid strangulation—and even to admit of utterance—as long as any animal vigour remained.

A pause now ensued; and the executioners entered into a fierce debate with each other as to the mode of torment that comprehended the greatest possible quantum of indignity, united with the utmost length and intensity of suffering. At this moment a gaunt and hungry-looking mastiff, of enormous size, was observed to have planted himself directly opposite the gibbet. He looked up with glaring eyes at the human victim of crime and cruelty, and with

* Galbert, in Vit. Carol. Bon.

open throat howled at him what might have seemed the maledictions of a demon. Deaf to the insulting cries of the multitude, blind to the engines of torture and final destruction which were pointed towards him, the eyes of the fated wretch were fixed in a stare of horror upon this frightful, but apparently harmless, object. This circumstance probably suggested the nature of the punishment that was eventually adopted; or it may be that some one was present who had listened to the prophetic curses of old Philippe, and who now, in the common spirit of fanaticism, thought it a religious duty to fulfil them.

The dog was hoisted up by another halter, and hung beside the man. The pen falters: it has undertaken a relation which it dares not render complete. The mastiff was beaten and stabbed with long iron-pointed rods, and in the agonies of insufferable pain, uniting with the instincts of Nature, it grappled with its fellow victim, bound, naked, helpless.* Bertulphe shrieked for the first time. In the fierce convulsions of death, he at last wrenched one of his arms from the cord, and grappled with the monster. The horrid rabble roared their applause; and, rushing round the gibbet, overwhelmed him with insults and execrations, as if to goad him to further efforts.

"Traitor! coward! murderer!" cried they.

"Fiends!" shouted Bertulphe, with a last effort, "I AM NO SERP!" and he yielded up the ghost.

* Suger, de Vitâ Ludovici Grossi regis; Chroniques de Saint Denis.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Thirteenth Century.

1204.—In a fourth crusade, the fanatics succeeded in conquering for a moment the Greek empire, and crowned their general, Baldwin, at Constantinople.

1208.—Another crusade of a still more lamentable nature was soon after engaged in. The crimes of the Mahomedans were thought to be as nothing to those of the Albigenses, the famous heretics of the South of France ; who impiously abjured in their maturity some portions of the vows which they were told they had taken in the cradle by the proxy of their godmothers. Luther and Calvin were not yet in being ; the Albigenses, by some strange mistake of nature, had been born before their time ; heresy was not reform, but simple heresy ; and the thousands who died for their religious opinions, on the scaffold or in the flames, were not martyrs, but children of the devil, dismissed from a righteous world to another which even they could not contaminate.

1223.—Philip, after gloriously beating the Emperor of Germany, who had leagued himself against France with John of England and the Earl of Flanders, at length died, everywhere victorious, and was succeeded by his son, Louis VIII., surnamed the Lion. This prince had narrowly missed being King of England ; the barons of that country—discontented with John, whom they had forced to sign Magna Charta, but could not force to observe it—having invited him over. John, however, happened to die just in time, and the crown was given to his eldest son.

Louis consoled himself for this disappointment by beating thoroughly the King of England, who, on his part, had some desire to establish himself in France ; and he filled up the rest of his short reign by massacring the subjects and laying waste the country of the Earl of Toulouse. The lands of the Earl, who was thought to favour the heresy of the Albigenses, had been bestowed upon the French King by the Pope ; but such gifts could only be received by those who could *take* them ; and in this instance, too, Louis missed enjoying a territory which had been presented to him, and which he had accepted.

1228.—Louis IX., who succeeded, deserved the title of saint, which the Church bestowed upon him after his death, much better than the ordinary run of saints. He was, however, only twelve years of age at his accession, and Blanche of Castile, the Regent Queen-mother, carried the arms of France again

into Toulouse. The Earl was subdued, and allowed an Inquisition to be established. Terrible word! The councils forbade the laymen to read the Holy Scriptures; and even the Breviary was only permitted in Latin. The key of heaven was thus placed in good hands. The Book of God being closed against the people, they were obliged either to allow themselves to be saved by their priests, or to do without salvation at all.

Saint Louis was generally successful in his wars with the English; but, in a singular spirit of kingly justice, he obliged such of his vassals as held English and French titles at the same time, to choose which master they should serve. In a dispute between the English and their King, of which Louis was chosen arbiter, he decided for an equable union between the royal authority and public liberty; and, with equal sagacity, although exercised on a very different subject, he refused the Pope an asylum in France, when that general disturber had been forced to fly from Rome. He abolished judicial duels, promulgated *établissements* to supply the place of the obsolete capitularies of Charlemagne, established trial by peers or juries, and introduced into the laws that fine maxim which proclaims that true justice should lean to the side of mercy. Last, not least, he seized upon the temporalities of such bishops as were convicted of exercising too harshly their professional right of oppressing the people. How could such a man become a Crusader?

1263.—Louis assumed the Cross, and passed into Egypt, to smite the Mussulman. He took Damietta; but was himself taken, with his whole army, and, after paying an enormous ransom, returned to France. At this period the crusade was preached to the shepherds; and a hundred thousand clowns set forth, in their wooden shoes, to reconquer the Holy Land. They robbed, it is thought, as they went along; but no one survived the journey to relate its adventures.

1270.—Louis, as he advanced in age, advanced in devotion, and but for the expostulations of his Queen, would have become a Cordelier. In this year he set out for Africa, with an army, to convert the King of Tunis. He saw his army perish before his eyes, and he himself went to join the departed saints.

His son, Philip III., surnamed the Bold, continued the war against the Tunisians, and only granted them peace on condition of their paying him a tribute. This was the last of the crusades. Some unimportant wars occupied the rest of the reign of Philip, and some disturbances, occasioned by the intrigues of his barber-surgeon, who was at length hung.

1285.—Philip IV., or le Bel, succeeded. He received the homage of Edward I. of England, for the province of Guienne; but, taking part in a quarrel which originated in the disputes about precedency of some drunken sailors, he cited the vassal before his court, and on his refusal, deprived him of his fief by force of arms. Flanders next felt his vengeance, the Earl having entered into an alliance with the King of England.

1300.—In a pressing necessity for money, which the people were unable to

advance, being already weighed to the earth with taxes, Philip had the temerity to attempt a little impost upon the clergy. The Pope, astonished and indignant, immediately launched a bull, forbidding ecclesiastics to pay anything whatever to the laymen without his permission; and Philip replied by a like order to the laymen, to pay nothing whatever to the Church without *his* permission. The Pope re-bellowed another bull; but at last, finding that he was likely to have the worst of the contest, Boniface made his peace with Philip by admitting his father Louis among the saints of heaven.

The Holy See was not long quiet. A French legate carried his insolence so far, that the King drove him from his presence; and the Pope, becoming absolutely outrageous, summoned Philip, under pain of a general interdict, to acknowledge that he held his kingdom by the grace of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Philip was still resolute; but it was necessary to have the support of the country, and he convoked a National Assembly, embracing the *tiers-état*, or representatives of the common people. This marks an important epoch in French history. The independence of the Crown was voted for by the three orders; and the omnipotence of the tiara declared by a council. Then followed the counter declaration of the King, and an accusation against the Pope of imposture and heresy—then the excommunication of the kingdom—and then the abduction of the pontiff's person—and finally, his deliverance and death.

The thirteenth century was the era of Roger Bacon in England; although his contemporaries, it must be confessed, took him for a sorcerer. A library was formed under Louis IX.; Mysteries paved the way for the drama; and in the *tiers-état* was faintly shadowed forth the existence of a power which was hereafter to be denominated the People. It is unnecessary to say anything further.



The Pilgrim of Saint James.



Forget the land which gave ye birth;
Forget the womb that bore ye;
Forget each much-loved spot of earth;
Forget each dream of glory;
Forget the friends, that by your side
Stood firm as rocks unbroken,
Forget the late affianced bride,
And every dear love token;
Forget the hope that in each breast
Glow'd like a smouldering ember;
But still the Holy Sepulchre
Remember! Oh remember!

The Crusader's Song.—HENRY NEEL

CHAPTER I.

My father's goods are all distrained, and sold !
What would you have me do ?

SHAKESPEARE.

IN July,* near the end of the month, in the year of Our Lord one thousand two hundred and forty-eight, on a high road not far from the château of St. Urban, in Champagne, a pas d'armes was held by a single knight against all comers.* The scene of this passage of arms was, as usual, a wide plain, affording a free career from end to end of the lists. On a tree, near which a herald stood in waiting, there hung two plain shields, one painted white, and one vermilion, to which were appended the challenge of the knight, and a statement of the nature and conditions of the combat. The challenge ran thus :

"In the name of the Holy Trinity, the blessed Virgin Mary, of my Lord St. Michael the Archangel, and of my Lord St. George, I, Renault de Varennes, a knight-banneret of Champagne, make known to all noble passers, that I am here, in consequence of a vow, and in honour of the lady I serve, seeking deeds of arms. I therefore require from you, in the name of knighthood, and by the thing you love most, that you will deliver me from my vow in the manner hereunder mentioned."

The challenge then went on to state the terms of the adventure, and the distinctions of the white and vermilion shields. The

* The nature of the pas d'armes is sufficiently explained in the text ; but in some cases on record, the pass, or passage, was undertaken to be defended by several knights at once. Among them was the "pas de l'arc triomphal," (year 1514) mentioned by Du Cange in his Dissertations on the History of St. Louis, in which Francis Duke of Valois and Brittany justed in this manner in the Rue St. Antoine at Paris, in honour of the solemnization of the marriage of Louis XII. The combat in which King Henry II. of France lost his life, in 1559, was also a pas d'armes. This sort of extravagance, indeed, appears to have been of rare occurrence so early as the thirteenth century.

white shield signified a combat of two courses with the lance, and the vermillion a duel on foot with the two-handed sword. The acceptor of the challenge, by striking one or other of the shields, was understood, according to the custom of chivalry, to point out the description of battle which he accepted.

The champion was mounted on a superb destrier,* and clothed in a coat-of-arms† made of cloth of gold and lined with fur, which completely covered his armour, and hung down the sides of his steed.‡

His age appeared to be about half-way between thirty and

* The great horse used in jousts, &c. The *courseur* was a slighter animal for less important purposes, and the *roussin*, a horse for agricultural or other labour.—Eustache Deschamps's MS. cited by M. de Saint Palaye.

† The most ancient monument which mentions coats-of-arms, is said to be the life of the famous Geoffry, Earl of Anjou, in the reign of Henry I. (eleventh century); and to this period is ascribed by some authors their origin. Velfen, Du Chesne, Fauchet, Du Tillet, Blondel, St. Pourth, &c. Du Cange, however, identifies them with the *επιθωρικιον* and *περιθωρακιδιον* of Plutarch, and the *sagum* (from whence the French word "saye" or "sayon") of the ancient Gauls. All these three, there is no doubt, were used for the same purpose—viz., to cover the armour, and the fashion probably did not differ much in any; but it may be true, notwithstanding, that till the era of chivalry the gentlemen did not begin to embroider or ornament their coats with the "charges" styled afterwards in heraldry, bends, bar-gemels, barrys, saltiers, chiefs, &c., and forming what is now understood—exclusively of the habit altogether—as coats-of-arms.

The coat-of-arms was of cloth of gold, silver, or fur; and, when worn plain, a knight was said, for distinction sake, to wear a coat of or, argent, &c., or simply to bear or, argent, and gules, vert, sable, gris, &c.; these last referring, according to Du Cange, to the colour of the furs. But in process of time, something was found necessary to distinguish more completely the individuality of the wearer, and the heraldic "charges" above-mentioned were invented. These were formed by cutting pieces of cloth or fur, and attaching them in the requisite shapes to the coat. The shields, in their turn, which had all along been painted to match the colour of the coat, received this new emblazonment; and instead of describing a knight by saying, as heretofore, "he bears or," it became requisite to say, "he bears such and such figures on a field or."—See Du Cange's *Dissertations on the Lord de Joinville's History of Saint Louis*.

‡ The *Lai de Lanval* shows that furred robes were worn even in the height of summer; and in the *fabliau* of the *Robbe d'Écclarslate*, in the collection of

forty, and his countenance might have been termed handsome, but for a certain coarseness, either of feature or expression, which is imagined by young ladies to indicate something opposite to the amiable. His square ensign, planted near him in the ground, and guarded by an esquire, bore token of many a rude and bloody fray; while its well-worn edges clearly indicated that the humble tails had long since been cut away, and the knight elevated from the rank of a bachelor to that of a banneret.*

Neither the superb coat of the knight, however, nor the splendid trappings of his steed, which boasted among the rest a saddle embroidered with gold, attracted, at that particular juncture, so much observation as the absence of a badge, assumed at the time by nearly all the chivalry of Champagne—the holy cross.

Louis IX., in consequence of a vision seen in sickness, had vowed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and little else was now talked or thought of, throughout his dominions and the adjacent

Le Grand D'Aussi, a knight, on going out of doors, puts on his cloak furred with ermine, even when he leaves his stockings behind him on account of the heat.

* Bachelor *quasi*, *bas chevalier* (according to some writers) or a knight of the lower grade. The term banneret was applied to the first order of nobility, and comprehended gentlemen of a superior rank, who had a right to bear a banner in the armies of their prince. This right could only be sought by those who had a competent estate, and were gentlemen of name. It was necessary that the aspirant should be able to bring of his vassals fifty men-at-arms into the field; and we learn from Froissart, that every man-at-arms was attended by two archers, or cross-bowmen, on horseback. This gives a company of one hundred and fifty horse; but it frequently happened that some of the attendants of the banneret were bachelors, or simple knights, who also had their train or vassals behind them; and thus a very handsome retinue followed the banner to the wars. When a simple knight was ambitious of raising a banner, he presented himself, generally on the eve of a battle, before his prince, with a lance in his hand, round which was rolled a pennon of his emblazoned arms; and either personally, or by means of a herald, made known his request, together with his nobility, services, and wealth. The prince, then unrolling the pennon, cut off the tails, and returning it to the knight, addressed him thus; "*Recevez l'honneur que vostre prince vous fait aujourd'hui; soiez bon chevalier, et conduisez vostre banniere à l'honneur de vostre lignage.*"—Ceremonial quoted by Du Cange.

territories. The nobles eagerly obeyed the call of the King, and the vassals of the nobles, and their vassals' vassals, down to the extremest link of the feudal chain, were equally ready to fling themselves into an adventure which, on one hand, promised fame and spoil, and, on the other, relieved them from their debts and various other disagreeables at home. Simple knights and esquires, who in many cases lived on their war pay, hastened to offer their services to lords who could afford to retain them; gentlemen who fought on foot were not less willing to earn their two sols Tournois a day in so holy a cause; and sergeants on foot and cross-bows greedily sold their services for their twelve and fifteen deniers, and a chance of martyrdom. As for the bannerets, whose pay was twenty sols, just double that of the knights-bachelor, it may be supposed that, in many cases, they were actuated exclusively by motives of pride and honour.* Besides these, there were a great many young men who were induced by the vague love of adventure peculiar to youth, and some by the more determinate love of a fair lady, to assume the pilgrim's staff; while the nondescript multitude of loose characters, which float like bubbles upon the surface of society, unconnected with its depths, were driven as usual before the popular gale.

But it must not be imagined that religious motives were wholly unknown among the crowd; for if these were not proximate causes with the majority, they at least came in as powerful auxiliaries. Many priests, it is true, left their convents to escape from the rules, lightly as these are supposed to have been worn, of the monastic life; but many more exchanged the cowl for the helmet, in the firm persuasion that by offering assistance to the invisible hand of God against His enemies, they were performing a sacred duty.† In fine, the crusade, it may be supposed, presented

* Du Cange, Dissert. on Joinville.

† "There was a most valiant man in our army, whose name was Sir James du Chastel, Bishop of Soissons, who, when he saw we were going to Damietta, and that every one was impatient to return to France, preferred living with God to returning to where he was born. In consequence he made a charge on the

a tempting aspect to the stirring spirits of the time of all classes, by the new and strange scenes to which it invited, and the associations of romantic adventure which are connected with far and foreign travel.

It was owing to this turmoil of society that the champion above mentioned had been left for many days, without interruption, master of his passage of arms. Sometimes, indeed, a knight spurred past on his way to the sea-coast, but, deaf both to the taunts and courteous entreaties of the banneret, he merely pointed to the badge on his shoulder, and pursued his journey; many of the passers-by were in too great haste about affairs of more consequence, to be prevailed upon to step aside and tilt at any man's fancy; and not a few, who would have gladly leaped into the lists without a second invitation, were restrained by a vow from gratifying their bellicose propensities before arriving at the Holy Land. Sir Renault de Varennes for some time bore his disappointment with much equanimity, but by degrees his temper became sour, and then furious; and he often turned a wrathful eye upon the iron greve riveted on his leg, which reminded him that he had no power to move, till delivered in the terms of his challenge.*

His appearing at all in such circumstances, at a time when the whole chivalry of his country were engrossed, soul and body, in preparations for a grand public expedition, could be attributed only to one cause—a desire to prove to the world, and to his mistress, that in remaining behind he was actuated by no fear of mortal man. The character of the knight, however, was so well

Turks, as if he alone meant to combat their army; but they soon sent him to God, and placed him in the company of martyrs, for they killed him in a very short time." Johnes's Joinville's Hist. of St. Louis. The historian also frequently bears testimony to the valour of the inferior clergy.

* A ring, or chain, worn upon the arm or leg, was the sign of a votive engagement, and signified that the wearer was the slave of his oath, and the debtor of God.—Tristan le Voyageur; Mabillon, *Siecle Ben.* Præf. No. 41. Persons decorated with this token were treated with high respect by the multitude.—Oliv. de la Marche, *Mem.*

understood throughout Europe, that this proof might well have been dispensed with ; and even those who refused him deliverance with most hauteur, were compelled to acknowledge in their hearts, that they would not elsewhere find, so far as the uses of war were concerned, a worthier foe than Sir Renault de Varennes.

The news of the passage of arms, in the meanwhile, was not slow in spreading itself abroad in the country ; and although many treated the situation of Sir Renault as an excellent joke, and not a few exclaimed against his impiety in thus trying to interrupt the progress of gentlemen on their way to the holy wars, there were yet some who burned with desire to grant his request. Among the individuals who were most anxious on this point, was a young esquire of Burgundy, whose name was Amauri de Harcour ; and his enmity to the knight was not without what is commonly imagined to be good cause—for, unfortunately, they both loved the same lady.

Amauri was the son of noble parents, who had died in poverty. The earliest thing he could remember was his mother, clad in her widow's weeds, leading him into the hall of the powerful Count de St. Paul, and demanding, for the honour of knighthood, and in the name of God and Saint James, that he would receive into his guardianship her helpless boy. The Count signified his compliance, as he was bound to do, by the wholesome customs of chivalry ;* and at the proper age of seven years,† his mother having died in the interim, Amauri was transferred from the ruins of his ancestral home to the splendid château of St. Paul.

The young page, who had thus entered his apprenticeship to chivalry, was at first a melancholy, if not a spiritless boy. The black and crumbling fragments of his native halls seemed to have cast their shadow upon his mind ; and he looked as if his mother, with her tears and her weeds of woe, was for ever present to his eyes. The desolateness, and almost literal solitude, of his situation, when kneeling by the side of her remains, when that last friend had departed, appeared to continue after the scene had

* Saint Palaye.

† Saint Palaye.

changed ; he carried abroad with him, as it were, the atmosphere of the dim and death-bed room ; and when suddenly impressed, as he sometimes was, with the metamorphosis that had taken place, he started, with the bewildered surprise of one who has plunged at once from darkness into light. This peculiarity in the poor boy confined him more even than was customary to the society of the females of the family ; but indeed at that time it was to the ladies that the education of the pages was almost wholly entrusted, who were thus early accustomed to the chains which, in after life, it became their duty and glory to wear.*

In this soft tutelage, Amauri was taught to pronounce the name of love with the same mysterious veneration with which he prayed to that beautiful and holy Virgin, whose image hung about his Marian heart like a dream.† Nor were there wanting the seductions of poetry to soften a character which would otherwise have been formed in the field ; for already the not unpolished strains of the troubadour chastened the music of the camp, and wantoned in the bowers of the fair. The chaos of language, in which barbarous Latin and harsher German had so long been struggling, was now become smooth enough to float the delicate flowers of song, and to “ babble ” as naturally as a running brook “ of green fields ; ” and although one could not yet say, “ *Cedant arma togæ,* ” yet the gown of the student was allowed to cover quite as gloriously the hauberk of the Knight as his coat-of-arms.‡

* Saint Palaye.

† Dr. Southey has aptly termed Catholicism “ the Marian religion.”

‡ The hauberk, or haubergeon, a sort of armour peculiar to knights, is described by Saint Palaye, as being a *double* coat of mail, sword proof. This, however, is an improper definition. The hauberk was made of small flat pieces of iron, square, and each filled with a hole, by means of which they could be worked on one another, so as to leave no opening. These are what Du Cange supposes to be represented by the mascles, or lozenges, in emblazonments ; which have derived their name from “ *macula*,” interpreted by Johannes de Janna, “ *Squammæ loriceæ*.” The squires, who are frequently supposed to have been interdicted the use of the cuirass, had in reality a cuirass peculiar to themselves, but lighter, and made in a different manner from that of the knights.

Without any decided turn, however, for poetry as a profession, and with a remarkable distaste for war and warlike sports, the page appeared to be growing up into a being neither useful nor ornamental. As he approached the age of fourteen, he was exposed to the jeers of his companions, who wondered what sort of figure he would cut in the sword and cuirass of a squire. The day for the ceremony of this investiture they pointed to as a threat; and Amauri, indignant, and yet half-alarmed, asked himself, with a start, how it was that he could not remain for ever the page of dames? All things around him answered the question. He was no longer allowed to lean on the lap of the still beautiful Countess de St. Paul, receiving the lessons of chivalrous love; and even her daughter Adelaide, his beloved playmate, now entering on her thirteenth year, seemed gradually to grow cold and distant, as shaking off the playfulness of childhood, she began to assume the airs of the little lady.

Amauri was piqued; and yet not piqued into valour. He bore the jeers of his comrades without retort; waited upon the beautiful Countess like a peasant-serf;* and left Adelaide in silence and apparent unconcern to her new disdain. When the due time at length arrived, he set out for the abode of his ancestors, to beg the assistance of his surviving relations at the ceremony of girding him with the sword of a squire.

The castle, which at his birth had echoed to the swell of music and the shouts of revel, was now dark and silent. The walls were in ruins, and the moonlight, shining through the chasms, showed that the ample courts were choked up with weeds and rubbish. He passed through the broken portal, and with a feeling almost of terror, mingled with strange curiosity, entered the building. Here he seemed to be on unknown ground. A confused mass of ruins surrounded him; and in the crumbling arches and distorted passages he could find no landmarks to guide his steps.

* It was the business of the pages to pour out wine, and perform other menial offices suited to their years. The renowned Bayard, who was page to the Bishop of Grenoble, is represented as serving him with wine at the table of the Duke of Savoy.—Vit. de Chev. Bayard.

The awe-struck boy, however, continued to explore ; sometimes groping his way in darkness, and sometimes emerging into a blaze of moonlight, which only made the desolation seem more ghastly. At length, as he entered one lofty chamber, the walls of which were yet entire, he stood still. His progress seemed to have been arrested by an invisible hand ; for his limbs trembled, he knew not why, and cold drops of perspiration beaded his brow. He felt that this spot, at least, he ought to recollect ; a thousand old memories stirred within him ; a thousand phantom-like images swept across his mind ; and at last, as his sight, accustomed to the gloom, detected the fragments of a bed mouldering in the corner, he sank upon his knees, and exclaimed in a voice of mingled grief, tenderness and awe, "My mother! oh, my mother!"

He was indeed in the room where his mother had died, led there by a hidden instinct of Nature, so often confounded, in the imaginations of the ignorant, with the things that belong to the *super-natural*. He knelt beside the same bed, he prayed the same prayer of grief and agony which had then burst from his heart ; the things and persons of that awful moment were around him ; his family's history swam before his eyes ; the air was thick with shadows, and his ear was filled with remembered or imagined voices, whose tones were like the sound of the wind at night, or of the sea, when the echoes of the strife of its mid-waste waters is rolled mystically and indefinite over its calm shoreward bosom.

Amauri rose up from his knees bewildered and half-terrified, yet with his more puerile sensations checked by an undefined feeling of reproach. He was the last of the line that had just passed almost visibly before him ! He called to mind the story of his brave father's death ; he felt again the tears of his mother, and listened to her mother-like dreams of the fortunes of her orphan boy ; he heard again the last intelligible words she had addressed to him, as she put his father's sword into his hand—"Be brave, be bold, be loyal!"* It was with a blush, partly of shame, and partly of enthusiasm, that he rose up ; and as he strode out of the room,

* The concluding words in the ceremony of making a knight.

the noise of his heels on the stones sounded, in his boyish fancy, like the clang of golden spurs.*

It was his next business to find his way to the chapel, that he might pay his devotions at the ruined shrine of St. James, the patron saint of the family; and there he made his vows to build up again the sacred edifice, and to raise a proper memorial over the tombs of his race, if ever, by the favour of God and the holy Saint, he should be enabled so to do. He then sought out, with a lighter heart, the few relations that were left to him; and, making his request to the two nearest in blood, an aged priest and his sister, he obtained their consent to his entering the station of an esquire; and on the following morning they set out with him for the château of St. Paul.

In the evening the ceremony of presenting him with his arms was performed. The chapel was brilliantly lighted up, and crowded with the family and vassals of the Count; and, among the rest, the young heiress of St. Paul was conspicuous, not only by the magnificence of her dress, but the extreme beauty of her girlish face and figure. When Amauri, with trembling limbs, and cheek pale with undefinable emotion, walked up the nave towards the altar, supported by the aged priest and his sister, his eyes encountered accidentally those of Adelaide. She was looking at him earnestly; and, on his part, the boy-page gazed as if he had seen his playmate for the first time. Suddenly he withdrew his eyes, the blood mounted into his face, his chest expanded, and with a second glance, half of reproach, half of proud resolution, which the girl did not feel, but which the woman one day understood, he strode loftily on.

He was presented at the altar by his guardians, each bearing a lighted torch; and after prayers and genuflexions, the officiating priest took a sword and girdle from the holy place.†

"Sir Page," said he, advancing to the boy, "you are now about to ascend another step in the path of honour and virtue which you have chosen. The weapon with which I now invest you (and he

* A distinguishing token of knighthood.

† Saint Palaye.

bound the girdle round him) is for use, not play. Depart, SIR SQUIRE, and see that you use it aright in the cause of God, and for the honour of noble chivalry!"

From this day the character of Amauri was changed. In a space of time wonderfully short, he became the boldest rider, the swiftest runner, and the stoutest wrestler of his age in the household of the Count. "Amauri is mad!" cried his astonished comrades; but all allowed that there was marvellous method in his madness. He attended with scrupulous exactness to the minutest duties of his office, and went through the due course of services, heterogeneous as they were, with uniform applause. He was first the squire of the chamber, which was but a slight remove from the post of page; then the squire of the table—of the wine-cellar—of the pantry—of the stable—and, in short, he became at length the squire of the body, or squire of honour.* In all these intermediate stages, he was admitted to increasing familiarity with the family of his chief. After carving the meat, serving the wine, and performing the other duties of the table—besides partaking of the feast themselves—it was the custom of the squires to clear the hall for dancing, in which they vied for the hand of their lord's daughter, and those of the other noble ladies who were present. Sometimes games of various descriptions intervened; and ever and anon it was the care of the young men to help their partners to spices and comfits, and to compound claret† and piment,‡ and mull wine and hippocras for the guests.§

In all the various duties of the day, Amauri, in process of time, became the very prince of squires. He was the best carver, the most graceful cup-bearer, the most elegant dancer, and the most skilful concoctor of cordials in the house. In the exercises out of doors, he bore the same ascendancy. He leaped upon horseback, armed from head to foot, without the assistance of the stirrup;

* Saint Palaye.

† A sort of drink made of wine and honey.—Bouteiller, *Somme Rural*.

‡ A mixture of wine, honey, and spices.—*Statuta Cluniacensis*.

§ Saint Palaye.

and unarmed, he could spring upon the shoulders of a man sitting in the saddle.* In mimic battles he was a hard hitter, and a good-humoured taker; in the vespers of the tourney, he proved himself a match, and sometimes more than a match, for the best knights that entered the lists;† and at last, when led into the field of real war, his daring courage and romantic generosity rendered his name so celebrated, that in the tales of the maidens round the hearth, he became a sort of Roland‡ of squires.

His twenty-first year at length arrived,—that period to which he had so long looked forward with intense longing and expectation; and Amauri might become a knight.§ Scarcely had the hour-glass shown the minute when, on that day twenty-one years, his cry had first thrilled his mother's heart, than he hastened to the Count, and kneeling before him in the presence of the whole court, declared his birth and services, and solicited the honour of Knighthood. He was refused!

That evening, pale and heartstruck, Amauri was standing at a

* Saint Palaye.

† This marks an important era of chivalry, noticed in the *Historical Summary*. The eve of the tourney was at first set apart for the amusements of squires; but afterwards young knights were permitted to enter the lists; and at length the heralds formally announced it, saying, "My Lords Knights, tomorrow will be the eve of the tourney, where prowess will be bought and sold with iron and steel." It is evident that an institution, the strength of which lay in the distinctions with which it was hedged round, could not long withstand this intermingling of ranks. Squires were soon admitted into the tournament itself; and the decline went gradually on until chivalry vanished like a dream.

‡ It is scarcely necessary to mention, that if

"The blast of that dread horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne,"

told to King Charles that Roland fell in the skirmish of Roncesvalles, it told nothing else about him, so far as authentic history knows. He was the nephew of Charlemagne, and warden of the sea-coasts, and therefore, in all probability, a brave man; but he appears to owe his hero-ship of romance to nothing more than the convenient obscurity in which he was left by the chroniclers, one only of whom mentions him, and that in a casual notice of his death.

§ Saint Palaye.

distant window, leaning his head upon the bars, when his lord stepped gently up to him, and placing his hand familiarly upon his shoulder—

"Amauri," said he, "why will you force me to seem the enemy of your fortune? I need not tell you, who are, in all respects but one, the most accomplished squire in Christendom, that obedience to every reasonable and honourable request is your first duty. Have I desired of you aught that is contrary to reason or honour?"

"No, sir, you have not."

"Once more, then, will you follow me to the Holy Land?"

"My Lord, I will rather die a squire!" The Count de St. Paul looked as if he would have answered, "Die then!" but, controlling his passion, he said in a subdued voice,—

"I cannot compel you, sir; for I am aware that you are no vassal of mine; but tell me, at least, for what reason you refuse. I know it is not from fear of Christian or Infidel."

"My Lord," said Amauri, "why do you think it strange that I should choose to stay at home, and fight the battles of God and my prince, in my native land? Are there not other gentlemen, both knights and squires, who have made the same election, without being exposed to degrading suspicions of any kind? Ask, I pray you, of the Lord de Varennes, why *he* will not forth to the battles of the Cross!"

"Sir Renault de Varennes," replied the Count, "is the suitor of my daughter and heiress, the Lady Adelaide, whose hand will be placed in his on my return: and good cause he has to remain behind, and look after his betrothed, at a time when the absence of so many great lords will let loose upon the country all the beggarly and unprincipled adventurers who are now restrained by their presence."

"My Lord de St. Paul," said Amauri fiercely and suddenly, while the blood mounted to his cheeks, "it is enough;—you may thrust me from the service of your house, if you will,—for that at least is in your power;—but I repeat, that I will die a squire rather than go with you to the Holy Land!" The Count followed

him with a searching, and not unadmiring eye, as he turned away ; and when the graceful, and soldier-like figure of his dependent had vanished through a doorway—

“Could he but raise a banner !” muttered he ; “but no—my broad lands must wed their equal ; they shall never go to make a banneret out of a simple knight.”

The Count's refusal was generally set down to a cause which, in that day, as well as in all others, marred sometimes the fortune of dependents—their own merit ; and Amauri was supposed to be denied the honour of knighthood, simply because his lord found him particularly useful in the character of a squire.* The young man himself, although he half suspected what was the real cause, refused to acknowledge that he did so even to his own heart ; and indeed he sometimes struggled manfully to appear ignorant, under the questions of the acute and impertinent examiner within, that there actually were feelings in that heart which called for the interference of the Count de St. Paul. But yet to leave Adelaide, in the absence of her father, in the power of the bold, bad man, whom he knew she hated—the thought was madness. “Whom he *knew* she hated !” How did he know it ? By the magic of the wizard Love, who builds things and circumstances out of wishes or fears, and, more subtle than Archimedes, moves the world of man's heart, without needing any footing to stand upon.

Adelaide had never told him that she hated the Lord de Varennes, far less that she loved her father's dependent. They glided past each other in the business of life as silent as spirits ; yet, like spirits, appearing to possess some mystic power of communion unknown to the grosser faculties of men. She had grown before his eyes from childhood up to woman's prime ; and when he felt his own heart expanding in the maturity of years, he ascribed the process to the innate power of the expanding image within. Perhaps he was right ; for his was a character in which pride and impetuosity, modified by the soft witcheries of song, and the instilled as well as instinctive ideas of sex, might have led to mere volup-

tuousness, but for something to refine, and exalt, and sustain. Adelaide was this something. She was as pure as she was beautiful: she was generous, high-minded, patient, and devout; the very presence of her image was of itself sufficient to consecrate the temple in which it was placed, and to chase away the ill thoughts which are the demons of the mind, and to make passion holy.

Accustomed to fight for her applause, and to receive a *look* as his rich reward, the young soldier at length carried with him the idea of his mistress into all the relations of life. She was his judge in the contentions of the soul and the senses; his counsellor in time of trial, and his supporter in the hour of danger; she nerved his hand in the battle, and melted his heart in conquest; she became at last even as a part of himself—an inseparable portion of his moral identity.

And yet all this was delusion; for his Adelaide was only an idea, till he had himself made her the individual whom his faith received as a being to be worshipped. She too had her dreams, and her images, and her high places of love and fancy! The gentle playmate of her infancy had been erected, as if by magic, into the hero of her girlish imagination. Here was a metamorphosis for curiosity to wonder at! She looked on what he *was* and what he *had been*, till childish affection on one hand, and youthful admiration on the other, met and blended at that point of romantic sentiment which throws such a dreamy and poetical hue upon the world, at an age when the soul is only half awake, and the heart only half asleep. In this case the hero did not sink, as he usually does, into the man; but when the days of hero-worship had passed by, and Adelaide looked around—a feeling, seeing, thinking, intellectual woman—the hero melted from her vision, and the man remained, palpable and definite, in his place.

She felt, she knew, that it was to her Amauri looked for the reward of his valour;—she felt and knew it; for she was a woman, and had a woman's heart and a woman's eyes. Suitors came—noble, rich, and valiant—and they departed as they came. Summer after summer passed away, and the playful graces of early years ripened into the full, majestic loveliness of womanhood.

The frolic laugh subsided into the "rich and melancholy smile;" and the voice, losing its high and gleesome tone, as if bent down by a load of sweetness, learned to thrill when it had forgotten to pierce. She was on the verge of twenty. It is no idle superstition which tells that lovers, who are destined to love long, grow, in the course of time, to *resemble one another*. The characters assimilate; and the expression, which is the reflection of character, proclaims, of natural necessity, that they have done so. Adelaide's mind raised itself to the pinnacle on which her soaring imagination had placed Amauri; and, loving greatness, she herself became great to reach it.

A few evenings after Amauri and his patron had parted in the manner related, the Count was sitting with his family, attended by some gentlemen of the household, on the steps of the château, enjoying the beauty of the hour.* The Countess was sitting close by her husband, and Adelaide, on the step above them, leaning her arm on her father's shoulder. There was something affecting in the scene, from the consideration that this was probably the last tranquil meeting of family love which the crusader was destined to enjoy. On the morrow would come the struggle and the agony of parting, the bustle of closing arrangements, the drawing up of the testament, and the solemnities of the church; and on the following day, with the wallet slung on his shoulder, and the staff in his hand, cased in iron, and loaded with arms, with his back to the home of his fathers, and his face to the far land of his travel, the soldier of the cross would begin his pilgrimage. They discoursed in a low tone, suited to the seriousness of their thoughts; and as the rude men-at-arms conversing near them, nursed in the lap of war, and brought up amidst turmoil and strife, looked round upon the fair and merry land they were about to leave, with its green corn waving in the wind, and peaceful vineyards stretching up the hill sides, their hearts beat quick, their eyes glistened, and their voices sunk into silence.

The quiet of the scene was soon interrupted by the return of a

* Tristan le Voyageur

horseman, who had been despatched in the morning, on an errand to a town at some distance.

"What news? What news?" cried the Count, as he rode up to the party. "What of the time?"

"My Lord," said the man, dismounting, "I have heard that the King is on his march to Marseilles, where the troops are to embark; and that the Queen, with her children and ladies, and the Countess of Poitiers, her sister-in-law, are with him."

"That is good news," remarked the Count, in a cheering tone; "we shall fight all the better that such eyes are upon us. What say you, gallants? For God and the ladies!"

"Sir," resumed the messenger, "it may please you farther to hear, that when passing along the great road, near the chapel of St. Urban, I witnessed a passage of arms held by the Lord de Varennes, in honour, as they say, of——" and the speaker stopped suddenly in confusion, and turned his eyes upon the Lady Adelaide.

"Ha! is it even so?" exclaimed the Count. "Honour to the sons of the brave!* And does he bear himself stoutly? How many have touched his war-shield?"

"My Lord, not one. The knights that have passed by were all withheld by vows or lack of time, being on their journey to Marseilles; and it is well known that the Lord de Varennes is too proud to tilt with a Squire, even though he were the squire of a banneret.† It is pity, indeed, as most men say, that so valiant a knight, instead of being delivered from his oath, should be kept there broiling, day after day, in a July sun. Yet there be churls of the commune, free merchants as they call themselves—peddling knaves, whom God confound!—who do nothing but laugh and joke at the occurrence, and turn the misfortune of Sir Renault into a ridicule of chivalry itself."

* An exclamation of the heralds, at any gallant or skilful deed performed in the course of a tournament.

† A squire-banneret, however, would seem to have ranked with a knight-bachelor, from the circumstance of the pay of both, according to Du Cange, being the same, namely, ten sols Tournois a day. The word *tournois* distinguishes the coinage of Tours.

"By all the saints !" cried the Count, jumping up, "this must not be. To horse, Sirs ! mount some of you at once, and carry round the neighbourhood the news of Sir Renault's challenge. Were it not for the sacred badge on my shoulder, I would deliver him myself !"

"Sir," said Amauri, darting eagerly forward, "why lament a misfortune which it is in your power to remedy ? Only make me a knight, and, I swear by the holy Saint James, I will strike a blow upon his war-shield that shall make the plains ring again !" The Count hesitated for a moment, but at last inquired sternly—"Will you follow me afterwards to Egypt ?" Amauri shook his head, and with a glance at Adelaide, which told how fierce was the mental struggle, turned away and quitted the party.

He coasted round the château, and striding rapidly forwards, plunged into a wood, where he was accustomed, after the fashion of lovers, to indulge his meditations. On the present occasion, these meditations were of no enviable kind. He had, almost unconsciously, looked forward to his twenty-first year, as to a period when he might honourably declare himself to Adelaide, and commence a course of adventure for the purpose of deserving and winning her. He was aware that, as a simple knight, he should have as little chance of marrying the heiress of St. Paul, as in his present rank of squire ; but, when the hauberk was once on, the lists of fortune, from which he was now excluded, would be thrown open, where, to a man of family antiquity like himself, dignities of all kinds, in the language of the heralds, were to be "bought and sold with iron and steel."

This he knew, not only from the romances which at this time began to delight the people, but from the same kind of personal observation which prompted the pictures of fiction.* He saw that courage and perseverance were the only things necessary, besides the qualification of noble birth, which he possessed, for

* It is generally understood that the manners in the early French romances were contemporary, however remote might be the characters and date of the story.

the achievement of fortune ; and, with the natural enthusiasm of the young and the brave, he seemed in imagination already to touch a goal to which access was debarred by nothing more than lances and shields.

Would this visit to the Holy Land, he inquired, so much insisted upon by his patron, be in reality fatal to his hopes of Adelaide ? Could he not trust to the fidelity of his high-minded mistress during the space when her pilgrim should be acquiring a renown that might render him worthy of her, and gathering barbaric gems to coronet her queenly brow on his return ? A glow, as if of sunshine, broke upon his heart, as it answered in the affirmative ; but the next moment the idea of Sir Renault passed across like a dark, cold shadow.

This man had been the earliest of Adelaide's lovers ; and his passion was so far useful, as, according to report, it was principally owing to his interference and intrigues that the Count de St. Paul had permitted his daughter to refuse several of the first offers which the kingdom could have afforded. She had now reached an age, however, when her womanish caprice could no longer be attended to, when her duty to the noble family which, in her turn, she was expected to transmit to another generation, must be performed ; and on a renewal of the proposals of the Lord de Varennes, her father did not hesitate to accept them.

Sir Renault was a proud, stern man, inflexible in his resolves, and as careless of danger as the sword with which he provoked or repelled it. From the first moment when he had thrown eyes of passion upon Adelaide's budding charms, he had watched her like a crouched tiger. Rejection could not turn him aside from his purpose ; coldness chilled not his passion ; hatred itself had no power to wither the hopes of his love. With indomitable patience he had stood every trial of his heart and temper ; he had even foregone his expectations of gain and renown in the Holy Land, that he might continue his watch ; and now, having crept nearer and nearer, till he seemed to be almost within grasp of his prey, he only waited for an opportunity to make the fatal spring.

Assisted by the kind of publicity in which great families lived at this time, when their domestic servants were their equals in birth, and aspirants to the profession of chivalry, Sir Renault, with the usual sagacity of his character, had early made the discovery that his most powerful, if not only rival in love was Amauri. A deep and deadly hatred against the presumptuous dependent rose, as of natural necessity, in his breast; and Amauri, on his part, looked with a kind of instinctive dislike on the dusky orbs that were for ever riveted on his mistress's face. This mutual feeling reached its height when the Count publicly named the Lord de Varennes as his future son-in-law; and Amauri, when looking forward in imagination to the period of his knighthood, eyed his enemy with a bitter and meaning smile. The first blow, however, was struck by the banneret, who, informing the Count de St. Paul of his suspicions, prevailed upon him to attempt to carry Amauri out of the way into Egypt, and, in the event of disobedience, to refuse him knighthood.

Harassing himself with reflections on his destiny, the dependent wandered to one of the sides of the thicket, and threw himself down on a green bank, from which the last rays of the sun were stealing slowly away. There was not a breath of wind, and all things were silent except the slumbrous, inarticulate voice which runs through the forest, even when its leaves are stillest. His eyes, which had scarcely been closed since the first refusal of the Count, began to get heavy; the things and persons that had filled his thoughts assumed a spectral, unstable appearance; and at last, allowing his head to sink upon the turf, he fell asleep.

He dreamed. He thought he was in Egypt, surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance of war. The fate of the day was to be decided by a single combat, and he was chosen as the champion of the cross, to tilt against a Saracen knight. They ran their course, and his lance pierced the enemy of the faith to the heart. Dismounting, he unfastened the helmet of the vanquished, and with joy and amazement beheld the features of Sir Renault de Varennes. The reward of his prowess, he imagined, was to be a banner; and when presented to him, he embraced it

eagerly; but in an instant it was no longer a banner, but his mistress Adelaide, that he had clasped in his arms. His feelings on this discovery were too mighty for the bonds of sleep, and with a cry of joy he awoke.

Grieving for the loss of his dream, as if it had been a reality, he again laid his head down on the green turf, and again fell asleep. He dreamed. The guardian saint of his house stood beside him, and pointed, as if commanding him to go somewhere. A dark cloud enveloped the scene in the quarter designated by the holy hand; but after Amauri had for some time looked earnestly towards it, the shades began to withdraw, and he saw the crescent moon riding serene amidst the vapour. Below was a faintly imaged figure resembling a crucifix, but its form was almost completely lost in the blaze of the crescent moon. The saint, after gazing upon him for some time with a look of stern command, appeared to be about to declare his meaning in words.

"Amauri," said he; but as the voice of his heavenly patron fell suddenly upon his ear, Amauri started and awoke.

He could scarcely persuade himself that the sound had not been a reality. "Amauri!" it said, as distinctly as tongue could speak, yet as sweetly as if Adelaide herself had spoken; and in great amazement he started up and looked around. It was now almost dark; but with the same distinctness as it had appeared to his sleeping senses, he saw the white figure of the saint for an instant before it vanished. A thrill of awe passed through the heart of the young warrior, and he stood for some moments as if he had been turned into a statue. His first impulse was to throw himself upon his knees, and vow a pilgrimage to the land where the Crescent triumphed over the Cross; but withheld by an idea that the apparition might have been nothing more than a delusion occasioned by his dream, he paused irresolute.

"Oh, holy protector," he exclaimed, "deign to grant me a sign that thy servant may know thee!" The sign was granted; for, on the instant, his eye rested upon a scarf bound upon his left arm, of the same form as the shoulder-belts to which the wallet of the crusaders was hung. Farther hesitation would have been

impious ; and Amauri knelt down, and vowed solemnly, whatever might be the sacrifice, to assume the Cross, and pass into the Holy Land, as a pilgrim of St. James.

CHAPTER II.

This ring—

Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love.

SHAKESPEARE.

ALL night long the château, and particularly the chapel of St. Paul, were in a blaze of light. The distant inhabitants of the district saw with amazement an appearance so unusual ; some started from their beds to gaze at the phenomenon ; and in places where several neighbours could join in company to protect one another from the wandering spirits of the night, all hurried towards the château to learn the cause of the illumination. A considerable crowd of all ranks, and of both sexes, was thus collected in the courts and around the walls ; and at an hour when, throughout the domains of France,* everything was usually buried in profound silence, the château of St. Paul presented such an appearance of animation as was but rarely witnessed in the daytime.

Amauri had signified his compliance with the wishes of his patron, who in his turn consented to grant the boon so important to the hopes and fortunes of his dependant. As it was necessary, however, that the new knight, before setting out on his pilgrimage,

* Du Cange has satisfactorily proved that Champagne was at this time a fief of France, and not of the Empire, as some writers imagine. The latter were misled by an expression of the Lord de Joinville, Grand Seneschal of Champagne, who refused to swear allegiance to Saint Louis, "not being his subject." As the vassal of the Count of Champagne, however, Joinville could not have sworn allegiance to the King of France, although the Count himself was a vassal of the King. The homage of the under vassals was due to their respective lords ; and it was only the great or direct vassals of the Crown who were the King's "subjects." Such was the nature of the feudal tenure.

should fulfil the promise he had made to deliver the Lord de Varennes from his vow, the august and imposing ceremonies by which a candidate was admitted into the noble order of chivalry were now in course of performance, with a splendour proportioned to the estimation in which the novice was held by his lord.*

It was necessary, owing to the press of time, that many forms should be omitted, or at least curtailed. The observance of the austere fasts, which preceded a ceremony fully as religious as it was military, was confined to a few hours; and the watching of the arms was held to be completed before daybreak. The Holy Sacrament was then administered to the novice; and on the elevation of the host, he saw corporeally before him the Master in whose service he was about to enter as a soldier of the blessed Cross. He was then led into the bath, and as he rose from the waters pure in body, he was reminded that this was but a type of the purifying of the soul.

Being conducted to a rich bed of state, he was laid therein, under a magnificent coverlid of minever.†

"Another bed, Sir," said the Count, "in the great city of Paradise, you must conquer for yourself by your chivalry."‡ Having lain for some time, he was assisted to rise, and clothed in a robe of fine linen of the purest white; and he then confessed himself, kneeling before the officiating priest, who afterwards pronounced a discourse explanatory of the articles of Christian faith and morality.

The novice then repaired to the chapel, which was splendidly illuminated, and crowded by the family and household of the

* The details of the ceremony which follow are taken chiefly from Saint Palaye, *Mémoires sur la Chevalerie*.

† A sort of fur, supposed by Du Cange to be the skin of a small animal called the Gris. The coverlids, or counterpanes, consisted usually of skins of value, and were always included (as they were also by the Romans) among the richest articles of furniture.

‡ The words used by Huës de Tabarie, in conferring the order of knighthood upon Saladin. *Ordene de Chevalerie*. In the History of Jerusalem, however, it is said that the honour was conferred by Humphry de Toron.

Count, and the most distinguished persons of the neighbourhood. Having reached the altar, he delivered his sword, which was slung about his neck, to the priest; who, after blessing it by prayers and invocations, returned it to him again. Amauri then knelt down at the feet of the Count de St. Paul, and offered him the consecrated weapon.

"Sir," demanded the Count, "for what purpose do you desire to be girded with the arms of a knight?"

"My Lord," replied the aspirant, "my purpose tends solely to the advancement of our holy religion, and the honour of noble chivalry."

"It is good," said the Count; "approach, noble damsels, and arm the servant of God and of the fair!" The Lady Adelaide, and another high-born damsel, obeying the command, stepped forth from the crowd, and Adelaide knelt on one knee, and clasped the left spur round the heel of Amauri. The novice visibly trembled with agitation at this part of the ceremony; but his emotion was attributed to the impression made upon him by the importance and solemnity of the occasion. The right spur was then in like manner fastened; then the hauberk laced round his body, the brassards fixed upon his arms, and the gauntlets drawn upon his hands.

When the arming was nearly finished,* Amauri dared to look his mistress in the eyes. Hers did not shrink from the encounter; their souls met, for the first time, free and unembarrassed, and in that long deep look they read the secret of their destiny. Amauri was startled from his trance by a blow with the flat of a sword on his shoulder; it was repeated a second and a third time.

"I make thee a Knight," exclaimed the Count de St. Paul, in a loud and solemn voice, "in the name of God, of Saint Michael, and of Saint George. Be brave—be bold—be loyal!" The casque of Sir Amauri was then placed upon his head, a shield slung upon his neck, and a lance put into his hand; and amidst the acclamations of the spectators, he strode to the door of the

* A knight was thus "dubbed"—*adoubé*, fitted with his arms.

chapel, where a horse, splendidly caparisoned, was in waiting, surrounded by almost all the lower classes of the district, eager to see the new-made knight. Having sprung into the saddle, without touching the stirrups, he brandished his sword and lance, with an exulting bound ; and the ceremony was concluded amidst the shouts of the people, which seemed to pierce the dull skies of the dawn.

As soon as it was sufficiently light, Sir Amauri, attended by a youth whom he had engaged to retain as his squire, set out for the passage of arms. As he rode, he could scarcely repress his unquiet feelings of exultation so far as to refrain from wasting the strength of his steed—of which he should presently have so much need—in leaping and racing. He was now a knight ; the lists of fortune had been thrown open to him ; and by means of his good sword, and with the assistance of his holy patron, Saint James, he should gain the prize ! He looked along the vista of his prospects, illumined with the light of youthful hope, and at the termination, saw with the distinctness of reality his beautiful and noble Adelaide. The folds of a banner floated round her queenly form, and the young knight already in imagination clasped them both in his arms.

He remembered his vision, and the preternatural appearance of the night before, and became more and more convinced that the message was from on high. He looked eagerly towards the land imaged in his dream, where the cross appeared pale and faint beneath the crescent moon ; but ever and anon the figures of Adelaide and the banner floated across the scene.

"We part not !" he cried ; "time and distance shall have no power to sever us. Where I go, there shall she be also. She shall be the companion of my peaceful hours, and the sole judge of the war-field. Her eyes shall be upon me, the only stars of my heaven. Even now she sees me—*Elle me voit ! Elle me voit !*" and these words the lover resolved to adopt as his motto for the device on his shield.*

* La Gaule Poétique.

On his arrival at the field of the passage of arms, he found the Lord de Varennes still unrelieved, and in a fitting mood to quarrel with the spirit of his father, if it had appeared to him. Amauri, neglecting the customary formality of replying through his squire to the challenge, rode up himself to the herald's tree, and struck one of the shields, in terms of his promise, so loud and long that the whole plain rung to the clatter.

The preliminaries were soon settled. Sir Renault's eyes lightened when he recognised his enemy, who had raised his vizor for a moment, as one exhibits to a wild animal some object of his natural antipathy, to rouse its fury. The combatants took their distance, flourished their lances for a moment, and swept like the wind to the encounter.

Their meeting was like that of two stout and well-tried soldiers. A brief, sharp crash told of the contact; their lances flew into the air in splinters; and both knights finished the career in their saddles—Amauri, however, having been bent back even to the crupper, by the superior weight of his antagonist. In the second course, Sir Renault's lance was splintered in the same manner on the cuirass of the new knight; while Amauri's, glancing upwards, burst the laces of his enemy's helmet, and fairly bore it off, leaving him to finish the course in his skull-cap.

Foaming with fury at this disgrace, although a casualty of the tilt almost as common as that of splintering lances, the Lord de Varennes threw himself from his horse, and placed himself in an attitude for the second trial mentioned in his challenge,—a combat on foot with the two-handed sword. Sir Amauri, however, coolly remarking that he had not meddled with the vermilion shield, and thanking his antagonist for the amusement he had been pleased to afford him, began to ride slowly out of the lists.

"Holy saints!" cried the banneret, "are you in earnest? Is there not spirit enough in the whole country of Champagne to deliver me from my vow?—Ah, dastards! were I but free of these accursed lists, I would compel the stoutest of you, under the edge of the sword, to do me reason!"

"Lord de Varennes," said Amauri, with affected hesitation, "I love you not enough to deliver you from your vow; but if I did, what should I gain by it? If I lost the battle, there would be no retrieve, for to-morrow I quit the country; and why should I, a knight of yesterday, run the risk of commencing my career with defeat? Only promise me, however, in the presence of this herald, and by the honour of chivalry, that if I am defeated now, you will finish the game with me on the plains of Damietta, and I am for you at a word!" A grin of fierce mockery writhed the features of Sir Renault, as, detecting the shallow artifice of his rival, he replied—

"Most sweet Sir, methinks there would be but little reason in an arrangement which should give the advantage to the conquered party! It may be, however, that as you are, as you allow, a new-made knight, you are ignorant of those rules of chivalry which hitherto you have been excluded from practising, and which declare that the terms are to be imposed by the conqueror."

"Sir," said Amauri, appearing to wax hot at the insulting tone of his antagonist, "I am not less acquainted with the laws and deeds of arms than yourself; and if I may judge by your arrogance, which is the usual quality of a recreant knight,* I believe that that same rule to which you allude, and which I am now ready to abide by, would answer as well as any to drag you into the battles of the Cross. As for me, I pretend not to tongue-valour; I leave the brave Sir Renault to fight with his shadow within the lists, and boast what he would do without them; and in the mean time I go where I am called by my God and my prince, to look for better tilers among the Paynim chivalry."

"Turn, caitiff, and look upon your death!" shouted the Lord de Varennes, unable longer to control his fury. "I accept the amended terms: I swear by my sword, that, if defeated here, I will

* This expression, so much in use among the romancers, meant originally nothing more than "a knight who confessed himself vanquished." *Recreant* is simply "exhausted, spent;" and when a combatant called out this word it was owning that he could do no more. Afterwards *recreant* came to imply a stigma of general cowardice and baseness, in which sense alone it is now understood.

consent to the adjournment of the combat to time and place, at the pleasure of my conqueror. Swear also, and come on !”

“ I swear in terms of your oath !” replied Amauri, and leaping from his horse, he drew his sword. The artifice which he had so successfully executed had only occurred to him in the course of the tilt, and, with the superstition of the age, he believed the idea to have been nothing less than an immediate inspiration of his patron saint. He advanced, therefore, upon his enemy, with the confidence of one who believes himself to be under supernatural guidance, and struck the first furious blow ; which, however, descended harmlessly upon the buckler of Sir Renault.

The Lord de Varennes drew back like a tiger when about to spring, —or perhaps was thrust backwards by the violence of the stroke ; but the next instant he plunged upon his antagonist, and returned the compliment with such suddenness and force, that the blow, beating down the shield, cut right through the mailed armour, and sunk into Amauri’s shoulder, sufficiently far to make the blood spout, although not far enough to injure materially the muscles. The young knight was bent down almost to the ground by the mighty blow, and perceived at once the critical nature of his situation, in a mortal grapple with one so decidedly his superior in physical strength. Shame and rage united with constitutional courage to nerve his heart ; the image of his mistress swam before his eyes,—“ Adelaide ! Adelaide !” he shouted—“ *Elle me voit !*” and, regaining his position by a desperate effort, he continued the fight.

The herald and the squires gathered around the combatants, unable to resist the intense curiosity with which they were filled by a scene in which the principals appeared to be actuated by a personal hatred more deep and bitter than they had ever before witnessed or heard of in the lists of honour.

The presumptuous cry of Sir Amauri, who had named the affianced bride of his enemy, filled Sir Renault with a rage which almost defeated its own desires. He showered down his blows with indiscriminating force, as if thundering with a hammer upon the anvil ; and seemed to have no other purpose than to beat

down his antagonist to the earth by the sheer weight of his sword. And this he infallibly would have accomplished, had Amauri continued to fight as he began; but, rendered prudent by the importance of the stake for which he played, the young knight abandoned a trial of strength in which he had no chance of success; and, while skilfully avoiding, or warding off, the blows of the banneret, only sought opportunities to wound him through his armour by repeated thrusts. The hoarse and constrained voice in which his invocations were made the while, proclaimed the deadliness of his purpose, and the force which he exerted at every stroke. "Ha! Saint James! Ha! Saint Michael! Ha! Saint George!" cried he, as if from the bottom of his bowels, while driving each time the point of his sword against his enemy.

The combatants had continued thus for some time, one party cutting and the other thrusting; and both were beginning to become faint with fatigue, when Amauri, suddenly shifting his ground as Sir Renault was in the midst of a blow, returned the salute in his own coin, and struck him so furiously upon the neck, that the laces burst for the second time, and his helmet flew off. A second blow, as quick as lightning, would have cleft his enemy's skull in twain; but Sir Renault had just time to parry it, and, in parrying, lost his balance, and was borne to the ground.

"Yield, Lord de Varennes!" cried the conqueror, placing one foot on his breast, and holding the point of his sword to his throat, in the attitude of thrusting,—*"yield, or thou diest!"*

"I yield!" replied Sir Renault; and as he looked up for a moment in his enemy's face, the glare of rage faded slowly from his eyes, and the deep, dull, lurid light of inextinguishable hatred gleamed in its place.

"Sir Knight," said Amauri, "having thus delivered you from your vow, it is my will, and, in terms of our engagement, I hereby command you, in the presence of this herald and of these gentlemen esquires, to depart instantly for Egypt, and on the day when the armament of the King of France shall have landed on the banks of the Nile, to meet me on the plains of Damietta." His squire having then dressed the wound on his shoulder, he pre-

sented the helmet in which he had fought to the herald, as was customary at the first joust of a knight,* and mounting his horse, rode out of the lists.

Sir Amauri had proceeded some distance on his way to the ruined château of his ancestors, where it was his desire to receive the scrip and staff from the old priest, his relation, at the shrine of Saint James, when he was overtaken by a young page, riding full speed, whom he recognised as one belonging to the Château de St. Paul, and more particularly attached to the service of the Lady Adelaide. Amauri's heart beat quick, as the stripling checked his horse by his side.

"How now, Sir Page!" said he, "you ride bravely.—What is the news?"

"Sir," answered the Page, "I have come to ask news of you.—Have you lost or won?"

"I have won the passage of arms held for your mistress, the Lady Adelaide."

"The Lady Adelaide," said the Page, "will not be so well pleased to hear of your success as you imagine; more especially, if your purpose in engaging Sir Renault was such as she fears it was. I am bid to say, in the event of finding you conqueror, that she cannot spare the Lord de Varennes out of the kingdom, just at this juncture."

"Imp of mischief!" cried Amauri, seizing the boy by the doublet; "how dare you come with a falsehood in your heart before a Knight of the Cross?"

"It is no falsehood," replied the lad, "and so this ring shall witness;" and he put into the hands of Amauri a ring which the latter well remembered as a favourite of the Lady Adelaide. "Take care, Sir new-Knight," continued he, looking up with the malicious grin of his age into the discomfited features of Sir Amauri—"take care that Sir Renault de Varennes trusts not, at your instance, his precious skin among the Saracens this bout—take care that he goes not to Egypt with the King of France; and as for you——"

* Du Cange.

"What of me?"

"Why, you," said the Page, moving leisurely off— "*you*, I take it, may go when you list;" and putting spurs to his horse, he scoured homewards like the wind.

More stupified by this rencounter than he had been by the most furious blow of Sir Renault, Amauri stood still for some moments upon the highway, looking after the flying Page. It was in vain to rack his mind with conjectures as to the cause of this singular message from his mistress; no effort of reason or fancy could throw the smallest light upon the subject; and at length, determining to wait as patiently as he might for a solution of the riddle till his return to the château, when an interview with Adelaide would clear up all, he pursued his journey.

To this interview he looked forward with a feeling of expectation and delight almost painful from its intensity. He was now a knight; he had begun his career by a deed of arms which half the chivalry of Europe might have envied; the moment was at hand when the silence which he had so long imposed upon his bursting soul could be honourably broken; and, before the sleep of another night should visit his eyes, the vows would be exchanged which should bind them together in the bonds, indissoluble to hearts like theirs, of faith and honour. A thousand times he kissed the token-ring; and at length, in the playfulness of his young and buoyant fancy, he half imagined that the mysterious message had been nothing more than a scheme invented by Adelaide to facilitate and account for the conveyance of a gift to her lover, on the occasion of his first knightly essay in arms.

He at length arrived at his destination; and, kneeling before the ruined altar, received from his aged relation the scrip and staff of his pilgrimage.

"Farewell, my son," said the holy man, when Amauri rose up to depart; "the blessing of the God of battles be upon the pennon of thy knighthood! Remember that thou art alone in the world, and walk cautiously, like one who has no staff but that sent from on high to lean upon in his pilgrimage; and no storehouse to look to, of the goods of the earth, save the wallet which must be filled by

his prayers and prowess. These dim eyes, I know, shall be sealed in death before thy return, and thy natural solitude will be still more solitary ; but Nature herself, by means of the human instincts and affections, will provide wherewithal to fill up the void of the heart. At all events, I feel that thou shalt want no one to remind thee of the promise thou hast renewed, amidst the bones of thy ancestors, to build up again, if ever fortune shall place it in thy power, the desecrated altars of the most holy protectoſt of thy family, the ever blessed Saint James."

When Amauri had replied to the farewell of the old priest, and departed from the chapel, it was with a feeling of desolateness such as he had never before experienced. The world before him, into which he seemed to be entering for the first time, was like an unknown wilderness ; and he almost fancied that behind, where the gloom surrounding the ruined pile was peopled with the shadows of memory, he heard voices which syllabled his name and called on him to return.

He was now in the direct road to the Château de St. Paul, when he was surprised by the somewhat unusual spectacle, in these times of peace, of a party of men-at-arms galloping towards him, as if for life and death. The lieutenant, with whom he was well acquainted, placed in his hands a despatch from the Count informing him of the arrival of a royal express, in consequence of whose news it was necessary that the Count's force should be embarked a considerable time earlier than had been calculated on. Amauri therefore was ordered to take the command of the men-at-arms, and proceed by forced journeys to Marseilles without returning to St. Paul, or otherwise expending an instant of the time which had now become so precious.

Here was a stroke of thunder for the anxious lover ! What a reward for the patience of his passion ! At the very moment when he expected to be able, confidently and honourably, to open his love-burthened heart to his mistress, and pour into her soul the secret that had hung like a spell over his life for so many years, he was informed that he must leave his native land, nay, Europe itself perhaps for ever, without so much as bidding her farewell.

"I confess, Sir," said he to the lieutenant, hesitating, "that I could have wished to see once more the fair towers of St. Paul, and to bid adieu to my comrades in arms who remain behind."

"Ah, Sir Amauri!" replied the soldier, "it is all the better for you that it has been otherwise arranged. For my part, were it to do again, I would ride forty miles rather than look upon an inch of that ground. Why, the green corn is even now waving before my eyes, and the wind that waved it singing in my ears! Your comrades have all sent their remembrance and their prayers—nay, there was not a household cur that did not look whiningly in my face, as much as to say—'Speak of me to Amauri! Even the Lady Adelaide——'"

"What of her? What did she say?"

"Was it the Lady Adelaide? Plague of such leave-takings—I shall forget my own name. Oh, now I have it; it was the Countess herself.—'Tell Sir Amauri,' said she, 'that I shall always remember him in my love and in my prayers.'"

"And the Lady Adelaide?"

"Ay, now I can tell what put her in my head. She asked me whether the Lord de Varennes was to remain behind; and when I, knowing at that time no better, answered that, doubtlessly, he was, she remarked; 'In faith, Sir, I am glad that we are not to lose all.'" Amauri wheeled suddenly round, and without another word set spurs to his horse, and, followed by the men-at-arms, took the road to Marseilles.

The ancient town of Massilia, now Marseilles,* exhibited less of animation in its appearance than the pilgrims expected. The King had sailed some days before, on the 26th of August, the morrow of the festival of St. Bartholomew, and by this time there were few of the transports still in the harbour, excepting the one which waited for Amauri and his company, and another in which the Count de St. Paul and the rest of his force were to embark

* At the date of the story the Lord de Joinville called it Masseille.—Hist. de St. Louis.

when they arrived. In the present state of his feelings, Amauri imagined that he had cause to rejoice at the mistake as to time which had separated him from his chief, and the rather as it seemed to be extremely probable that Sir Renault de Varennes would sail in the same vessel with the Count. He prepared, therefore, for sea without delay, and on the same day embarked with his men-at-arms, all having previously confessed themselves, at the fort of Notre Dame de la Garde, on the promontory which enclôses the port of Marseilles.

As it was at that period the custom for horses to enter by great portholes in the side of the vessel,* the embarkation was effected with little trouble or delay; and when all were on board, these apertures, which were under water when the ship was at sea, were closely caulked.

"Forward there!" cried the captain.

"Ay, ay, Sir!"

"Is all ready?"

"Ready!"

"Then man the forecastle with the sailors of Church, and stand by to heave off." The priests and clerks belonging to the expedition having received the word, now took their post upon the forecastle, and began to chant the beautiful hymn of "*Veni Creator Spiritus*."† Their rich voices, echoed by the rocks of the promontory, rolled along the swelling waters; and in the midst of the invocation, the mariners hove gently off and shook out their sails. With a sensation of awe, the landsmen saw the firm earth receding from them, while as yet their motion was imperceptible; but presently the canvas filled, and the vessel roiled to leeward, and then bounded, like a living and sentient creature, towards the open sea.

Amauri, who had never been in such a situation before, was for a while diverted from his own perplexities by the novelty of the scene around him. In particular, he marvelled at the mixture of christianity and heathenism exhibited in the conduct of the sailors;

* Du Cange.

† Joinville, Hist. de St. Louis.

for, although they had carried the Eucharist on board,* afraid, as it appeared, to trust to the protection of the Divine Body, they had also lashed a sword to the mast-head to conjure the winds.†

The wind speedily increased to a breeze, and the coast became an undefined speck upon the edge of the horizon: even this soon after disappeared, and the ship was alone on the bosom of the boundless and desolate sea. Amauri at length, when he would have gazed even upon that quarter of the circle where lay, lost in distance, the beautiful plains of his native land, knew not whither to turn his eyes; but when in the afternoon the sun dived slowly into the ocean, the sailors, pointing to the spot, exclaimed, "There is our country!"

And promptly did the spirits of memory answer to the spell. Corn-fields waved in the distance, and song-haunted rivers glittered in the golden light; the hum of the town, or the music of the grove, rose on the charmed ear; the cottage by the hill-side, and the proud, stern towers of the château, sprang alike out of the deep. The air was crowded with things of enchanted life—the weeping mother, with her little ones clinging round her knee—the forsaken mistress, lonely and pale in her evening bower—the grey-haired father, turning with a sigh from the rude, unstable sea, where floated the hopes of his age, to fix his dim eyes on the sure and peaceful grave! Tears were seen on many a manly cheek; and the half-repressed sobs of the young pages, who thought of their brothers and sisters, in their own beautiful and beloved homes, were distinctly audible in the stillness of the hour.

The ship continued to plunge sternly and proudly away, even from the dreams of the land; the fairy pageant faded in the west with the last rays of the twilight; and clear, and cold, and serene, the new moon stood alone in the heavens. Amauri thought of his

* Joinville, Hist. de St. Louis. "I must say here," remarks the Seneschal, "that he is a great fool who shall put himself in such dangers, having wronged any one, or having any mortal sin on his conscience; for when he goes to sleep in the evening, he knows not if, in the morning, he may not find himself under the sea."

† Thiers, *Traité des Superst.*

dream, when he saw the silver crescent ; and in the imagination of the Pilgrim of St. James, a pale, faint cross was painted beneath it on the sky. He breathed a prayer for the exaltation of the latter, mingled with a sigh, as he thought of all he had lost in order to assist in it ;—

The prayer was to his patron saint,
The sigh was to his lady fair !

By and by, the moon was no longer alone ; for troops of stars appeared emerging on all sides upon the heavenly plain ; and the crusader's eyes sparkled, as the scene brought to his mind the chivalry of Christendom hastening from every quarter of Europe to the land of the Crescent. Although all was bright above, however, a cloud of thick darkness was spread upon the bosom of the sea ; and the mariners, to secure themselves from wandering during the night, lighted up the mystic compass which points the way of the bark over the pathless ocean. Amauri looked with a traveller's curiosity upon this machine, which was nothing more than a magnetic needle balanced on a straw, and set floating in a vase of water ; and at first he half-blamed his traveller-like credulity in believing in the wonders that were ascribed to it.*

"The North Star," said the sailors, "of all the host of heaven, is the only one which is immoveable ; and the magnet, we know not why, points for ever towards the North Star, thus teaching us how we are to steer, even in the middle of the night." Amauri thought, by a natural process of association, of her who was the North Star of his heart, and of the fidelity of that heart, which in distance and darkness, in doubt, and almost in despair, still fondly turned towards her ; and believing faithfully in the miracles of love, he no longer refused his assent to the miracles of Nature.

* The compass is so described in a satirical piece entitled "Bible," by Guyot de Provins, written towards the end of the twelfth century. This was its state in China when the fleets of Europe first arrived there ; and some writers have imagined that Marco Polo, and some, that the Neapolitan Gioia, brought the invention from that country. The voyage of the Venetian, however, did not take place till the thirteenth century ; and Gioia was not born till the year 1300.—*Le Grand D'Aussi.*

In due time, the pilgrims arrived at the island of Cyprus, where they found King Louis, and a part of his gallant army.* Sir Amauri was received with great respect by the knights and barons, who had heard of his joust with the Lord de Varennes; and the King himself thanked him personally for having forced so brave a noble into the service of the Cross. Everything for some time was hope and joy, for the season was favourable, and stores abundant. Two years before, provision had begun to be made for the refreshment of the expected army; and the piles of wine-casks, kept in the open fields, looked at a distance like immense wooden houses. There were also absolute hills of grain of all sorts, which one would have thought to be plantations of green corn; for, owing to the frequent rains, the seeds had sprouted, although, when the crust of vegetation was removed, the grain was found fine and fresh beneath.†

King Louis, however, would fain have set sail at once; but, in an evil hour, his barons persuaded him to wait for the rest of the forces. Owing, probably, to the very circumstance of its being known that he waited for them, the expected reinforcements dropped more leisurely in; the climate at last became sickly; and before the month of March, many of the barons died. Among others who were waited for, the Count de St. Paul and the Lord de Varennes had not yet made their appearance; but Louis, at length determining to lose no farther time, sent orders round the fleet to be in readiness to sail at an hour's warning.

On the day before Whitsunday, the signal was given; and it fortunately happened that, on that very morning, some of the expected ships appeared in sight, and were in time to join the fleet. At the same moment, eighteen hundred vessels, large and small, weighed anchor, and the whole sea looked as if it had been covered with cloth, as they spread their white sails to the wind.‡ The shouts of the sailors, the rattling of the cordage, and the chanting of the priests, confounded the ear with their heterogeneous noise; while, owing to the unskilfulness of some pilots, and the

* Joinville.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

obstinacy of others, and above all things to the want of room, a misunderstanding still more troublesome prevailed, which had the effect of entangling many of the vessels, and creating a scene of confusion that might have ended in disastrous results.

In the midst of this dangerous bustle, Sir Amauri's vessel ran foul of another, which appeared to be one of the new arrivals; and for some time the two lay yard-arm and yard-arm, like enemies grappling for a close fight. The young knight, who was engaged in examining the accounts of his wintering at Cyprus, after patiently enduring for many minutes the din that ensued, ran upon deck to ascertain the cause of the disturbance; but just as he reached the gunwale, a dissolution had been effected of the unkindly union, and his ship was dropping astern of the other. While gazing with a landsman's curiosity into the open windows of the stranger, he saw a face which almost made him leap with emotion:—it was that of Sir Renault de Varennes. No sooner did the banneret recognise his rival, than with a malicious and exulting smile, he caught up a shawl which appeared to have been lying at his feet, and fixing it banner-wise upon his lance, waved it out of the window, in a menacing manner, towards Amauri.

Amauri's heart sickened—for it was Adelaide's favourite shawl, a present which she had received from the Queen of France; but, controlling with customary pride his feelings, and assuming an air of hope and confidence which was foreign to his heart—

"I thank you, Lord de Varennes, for the omen," he cried, pointing to the square form of the ensign; "mine is as yet only a pennon!" and while he was still speaking, a third vessel plunged in between, and he saw his enemy no more during the voyage.

After various casualties of calm and storm, the King entered one of the mouths of the Nile, on the Thursday after Whitsuntide, and anchored before Damietta, an important town situated between the two outermost branches of the river.* The effects of the ill-advised stay of the Christians at Cyprus were now made

* Some years after the departure of St. Louis, Damietta was totally destroyed by the Mussulmans themselves, with the exception of the great mosque. The present town is situated a little to the south of the old one.

manifest; for the Egyptians, having had full time for preparation, were stationed in great force upon the banks. They were all handsomely armed, and commanded by the Sultan himself, clad in burnished gold, and looking, when shone on by the sun, like an earthly sun himself.* So frightful a noise did these infidels make with their horns and nacaires, that the stoutest knight in the ranks of the crusaders felt his heart stirred with surprise.†

The King having called together his barons and counsellors, it was resolved, after some diversity of opinion, that the army should disembark on the Friday preceding Trinity Sunday, and offer battle to the Saracens. In the meantime, preparations were made by the knights on board the ships and galleys to show as gallant an appearance as possible before their unbelieving enemies. Nothing was heard but the hammer of the armourer, and the furbishing of steel, and sharpening of swords. The decks of the various vessels looked like plantations, where banners and pennons grew as thick as trees in a forest.‡ Advantage, also, was taken of the opportunity by friends to exchange visits; and boats flying every instant through the water, with ensigns waving in the stern, gave a singular character of animation to the picture.

Sir Amauri's ship having taken up a sufficiently good position, he had been early ordered, with official coldness, to remain and land where he was, and to join forces with his patron on the beach. He had no visits to pay, therefore, either of kindness or duty; and he stood alone, even on the crowded deck, gazing upon

* Joinville.

† Joinville. The nacaires mentioned here were an instrument invented, it is probable, by the Saracens, and borrowed from them by the Italians, Germans, French, and other nations. The Italians called them *naccara*, and *gaccara*, names much more likely to resemble the original than the French word. Colonel Tod frequently mentions the *nakarias* in the wars of the Rajpoots, in his delightful and original work, "The Annals of Rajhasthan." He describes them as being great kettle-drums.

‡ "N'i a riche homme ne baron
Ki n'ait les lui son gonfanon,
Un gonfanon ou autre enseigne,
Et il se maignie restraigne."—Roman de Rou,

the shore. It may be that sometimes the cornfields of merry Champagne waved before those fixed eyes, and that his thoughts, which appeared to be busy with the Saracen army, wandered back to the old towers of St. Paul, and lost themselves in conjectures as to the real sentiments of Adelaide.

However this may be, it chanced that, after a long reverie, on turning round, with a sigh, to look at the motto on his pennon, "*Elle me voit*," he started suddenly back like one affrighted by a dream. "*Elle te voit*" ran the legend, and Amauri rubbed his eyes, scarcely believing himself to be awake. He sought in the faces of his comrades for some indications of a successful joke, but he appeared to be the only one who had even noticed the alteration, and at length, with the vanity natural to a young and handsome knight, he imagined himself compelled to believe that this was a challenge of gallantry offered by some one of the ladies who were with the Queen. If this was the true explanation, the moment chosen by the fair one was unpropitious, for, in the great crisis of fortune, it is only love, in its noblest and gravest character, that can enter into and harmonise with the feelings of a man. Amauri restored the original reading of his motto.

"I accept the incident," said he, "as another favourable omen, for I am born to conquer my fortune or perish!" and, grasping his lance with both hands, he turned again a fierce and yet admiring look upon the array of the Saracen host.

The disembarkation of the troops now began. The King drew close in along shore, and a galley was despatched to land the sacred banner of St. Denis.* Nothing was heard but the shouts

* The famous standard of St. Denis is supposed to have been originally made use of by the abbot and monks of the royal abbey of that name in their private wars, and to have been raised as the banner of the Kings of France, when the Vexin fell under their sway, in the reign of Philip I. or Louis le Gros. Like other church banners, it was attached to a cross-bar fixed horizontally on the end of a pike, and the materials were of silk or taffeta, of a red colour, and slit up in several places from the bottom. The pike, or lance, on which it was borne, was gilded, and from these particulars of form and colour, according to Du Cange and others, it derived its name of *Oriflamme*. A much higher an-

of the soldiery, the braying of trumpets, and the thundering roll of the drums, as the various galleys pushed off from the ships, and rowed towards the beach. Whether owing to the confusion of the scene, however, or to design, the galley which had been promised to Amauri to land his men at arms did not make her appearance, and the knight, with fury and dismay, saw himself almost the only officer in the host who was stationary at so important and exciting a moment.

It so happened that the Lord de Joinville and his knights, who were passengers in the same ship, experienced a similar neglect from their party, and all on board seemed ready to throw themselves into the sea with vexation.

"My lords knights," cried Amauri suddenly, "why wait we here bewailing the negligence, or cursing the treachery, of our comrades? The ship's boat will hold a sufficient number of us to make good our landing, even should we have the high fortune to be the first on shore. Follow me, all who love the Cross!" and he leaped into the boat, which was immediately filled by some of his own men at arms, and by the Lord de Joinville and his knights shouting their war cries.

Amauri's enthusiasm had not been kindled entirely by the common principle of soldierlike honour, for he had seen the barge of the Count de St. Paul, followed closely by that of the Lord de Varennes, bearing gallantly on towards the shore. The galleys were painted, within side and without, with escutcheons of their masters' arms, and manned by three hundred sailors, each bearing a target of their arms, and a small flag impressed likewise with the same in beaten gold, and, indeed, the noise and waving of the flags, the glitter of the gold and steel, and the sound of the drums, trumpets, and Siracenic nacaires, which regulated the dip of the oars, combined to render the whole as splendid a war pageant as could be conceived.*

tiquity, and many miraculous virtues, are ascribed to it by those who believe that the vial of oil which anoints the Kings of France came from heaven, and that the said Kings are able to cure scrofula, and hanged persons to dissipate wens, by the touch.

* Joinville.

Clumsily formed and heavily laden, however, as was Amauri's boat, the furious exertions of the knights made her cut the water like a pleasure skiff, and she passed in gallant style between the St Paul galley and the bows of the King's ship, from which a barge had just shoved off, bearing the royal person.

"Well done, Amauri!" cried the Count, leaping upon the gunwale. "Honour to the first who lands!" and Amauri and his men-at-arms greeted their chief with a shout. The sides of the King's ship were crowded with ladies of the royal suite, applauding with their shrill cries the generous race; and both knights and common seamen appeared to be inspired with double energy by the sound. Amauri, however, maintaining his advantage, shot ahead of the three galleys, and was soon within two boats' length of the shore.

"Ho!" shouted the Lord de Varennes at this moment. "Let no man dare to land before the banner of St. Denis!"

"Wait for the oriflamme! wait for the oriflamme!" repeated the royal party, enraged at their failure;* but Amauri only replying in a loud voice, with the family word of St. Paul—"Montjoye à Chastillon!" and the Lord de Joinville, who was attached to the private service of the King, crying the national war-shout, "Montjoye St. Denis," the boat grounded, and the knights leaped to land, the first of the Christian army.†

* Joinville.

† War-cries were at first simply invocations of the Deity and his saints; to which afterwards came to be added, sometimes, the name, &c., of the individual, family, or country using them. "Montjoye St. Denis," is compounded of the title of the Patron Saint of the Kings of France, and (according to some) of an expression made use of by Clovis, who, calling upon St. Denis for aid, promised to acknowledge him for his Jove or Jupiter. Others interpret the word, *ma joie*, my joy, my hope, my consolation; and others again think that it has reference to the hill Montmartre, on which St. Denis and his companions suffered martyrdom under Decius. "Montjoye" was also adopted as part of their war-cry by some of the nobles of France, as in the instance of the Count de St. Paul, mentioned in the text. It may be proper also to remark, that those only who were in command, and bore banners in the army, were allowed the privilege of a war-cry; and thus we find Sir Amauri making use of that of his chief.

It is hoped that the introduction here of the following note, appended by

CHAPTER III.

O sair, sair did we greet, and mickle say of a'
 Ae kiss we took, nae mair—I bade him gang awa'.
 I wish that I were dead, but I'm no' like to dee;
 For oh! I am but young to cry out, woe is me!

LADY ANNE LINDSAY.

IT is not the purpose of this story to enter into any minute detail of the battles of Saint Louis on the banks of the Nile; and indeed, from the descriptions given by an eye-witness, the valiant Lord de Joinville, mentioned above, which combine in so remarkable a manner the charms of fictitious writing with the severities of truth, the subject may be said to have already passed into the Romance of History.

No sooner was the holy banner of St. Denis raised on the strand, than, to the joy and amazement of the Christians, the Saracen army fled before it, and King Louis was permitted to take up his quarters in the city of Damietta without opposition.* Here

Johannes in his Joinville will not be deemed out of place: "During the time this sheet was printing, I have heard from my friend, the Rev. W. Shepherd, a strong and happy confirmation of the efficiency of the war-cry. A pupil of his, now a lieutenant in the 20th regiment, that has most gallantly distinguished itself in the fields of Calabria, writes word, that previous to the battle of Maida, the French advanced to the charge like lions; but when within five yards, one of the English soldiers shouted 'Huzza!' in which he was followed by the whole line. The French, instantly panic-struck, wheeled about, and in a few minutes were all bayoneted, except one officer, to the amount of seven hundred."

* Joinville. The Oriental Chronicle, however, says that the city surrendered after two days' siege. Whichever account be true, the circumstance is very extraordinary, when the previous history of the place is considered. In 1169, during the reign of Saladin, it triumphantly withstood a siege of fifty-five days, by a force of twelve hundred vessels; and in 1219, thirty-one years before the arrival of St. Louis, it was carried by storm, after a resistance of sixteen months and twenty-two days. The army of the crusaders, in the latter case, consisted, according to Makrisi, of seventy thousand cavalry, and four hundred thousand infantry.

the usual excesses were committed which have always dishonoured the Eastern wars of the Cross. The wives and virgins of the infidel land were insulted, resistance to the unholy desires of the crusaders was punished with the sword, wine and blood flowed together in the heretofore sanctuaries of domestic peace, and debauchery, arm in arm with murder, staggered through the streets of the contaminated city.

The individuals, the purpose of whose pilgrimage had been consecrated by a mistaken, yet still honourable zeal for religion, and the high minded and chivalrous youths, who had flung themselves into the crusade in search of renown in arms, and of adventures wherewithal to make the listeners sigh and tremble in the bowers of their lady loves at home, were shocked and disgusted by the unexpected scene. Saint Louis himself, who was as much a saint as a king could be, witnessed with dismay the progress of the moral pestilence, but he was now in the toils—a leader, it is true, but a leader of banditti, who can only command when the purpose is criminal, and at length, he had the mortification to see rising within a stone's throw round his own pavilion, houses of public debauchery, where the ministers of vice were his own personal attendants. The Saracens, in the meantime, stung almost to madness, gathered in crowds round the city. Not daring to advance in order of battle, they slew or carried off all the stragglers they could find, and the Sultan having offered a gold besant for every Christian head that should be brought to him, many desperadoes skulked in and out at nightfall, leaving decapitated trunks to testify in the morning the boldness of their rapacity and its success.†

From this scene of horror even the vicious at length were glad to escape, and on the arrival of the Count de Poitiers, with the *arrière ban* of France, it was determined that a great part of the army should march upon Babylon.

Sir Amauri and the Lord de Varennes, who had met, conformably to agreement, upon the plains of Damietta, had been with difficulty prevented from turning against one another the arms

* Joinville.

† Ibid.

which had been consecrated to the service of the Cross. These two knights met only once more during the stay of the army in the city ; but the meeting was attended by circumstances so important to Amauri, and perhaps to the event of the crusade itself, that it is necessary they should here be related.

The day after the entrance of the Christian army, and when as yet the arrangements were so imperfect that individuals found it difficult to ascertain the post taken by their own parties, Amauri was wandering through the streets of Damietta in search of his superior, the Count de St. Paul. He had not seen this nobleman since his departure from the chateau, except for a moment when the Count stood upon the gunwale of his barge ; and the young knight had not merely official reasons for desiring the interview, but was impelled to it by a feverish anxiety which had beset him on the subject of his mistress. By this time he was heartily ashamed of the facility with which he had allowed himself to be impressed by circumstances with which there was a strong probability that Adelaide had had nothing to do. He remembered the critical situation in which she had stood between her father and her powerful suitor ; and that her love for him, allowing it to exist at all, so far from being declared, had never even been solicited ; and, while easily excusing any duplicity she might have been guilty of in public, he was ready to poinard himself for vexation at what he now termed his brutality, in quitting the country without even sending her a token in exchange for the one she had so ingeniously contrived to transmit to him. Her ring was now become not merely valuable for its associations, but a relic holy in itself ; he wore it constantly on his finger, and would at any time have cheerfully given his life for its preservation.

Attracted by the splendid appearance of some buildings at a short distance from the street, and the retired beauty of their situation, Amauri wandered towards them with a stranger's curiosity. They had evidently been the residence of persons of consideration in the city ; and, even in midst of the prejudices incidental to the period, the knight could not altogether repress a sensation of pity as he reflected on the hard fortunes of their unbelieving masters.

All was now silent and desolate around them ; the gates and doors were wide open, and not even a dog was to be seen at watch in the deserted courts. Suddenly, a shriek, as if from a distant apartment, broke the stillness of the moment. Amauri turned sickening away, for already the reign of shame and terror had begun ; and the comparatively small number of men of principle and honour in the ranks of the crusaders, could only shudder over the deeds which they were unable to prevent or punish. A second 'shriek, however, came more wildly upon his ear. It was a woman's voice, and Amauri, with a deep and bitter imprecation, drew his sword, and rushed into the house.

Conducted by the cries of woe and terror which became quicker and wilder every moment, he reached the scene of violence, and beheld a young and lovely female—a mere girl, in the first virgin spring of her beauty, struggling in the fierce grasp of a Christian knight. The ruffian turned round on the entrance of Amauri, startled by his shout of menace and disgust, and disclosed the features of Sir Renault de Varennes.

"Coward and slave !" cried the young pilgrim, "if I may not chastise you in a personal quarrel, yet shall your life pay the forfeit of disobedience to the orders of the King ! Draw, and come on !"

"Come on, then, presumptuous boy !" replied Sir Renault ; "the hour of reckoning has at last arrived, and a bloody one it shall be ! Meddling fool, you shall cross me no more, either in the path of love or hate !" and, dashing the fainting girl on the floor, he drew his sword and rushed upon his enemy.

The fight was for some time perfectly equal ; and at length a momentary truce, for the purpose of regaining breath, was tacitly agreed to by both the combatants, who were already covered with blood and perspiration.

"This room is close," remarked the Lord de Varennes ; "methinks we want air ;" and he threw open a lattice, and leant out.

"Enough !" said Amauri ; "one of us two, in the immortal part at least, shall presently have more of air than earth. Come on again !" The Lord de Varennes suddenly raised a horn to his lips, and blew a blast that echoed round the whole buildings.

"Ha, traitor!" cried Amauri; "but your cowardice shall avail you nothing. This for Adelaide! this for the laws! this for revenge!" and at each thrust he had the satisfaction to see the blood of his enemy flow, who hardly had time enough to regain his position. In another moment, however, three or four of the retainers of Sir Renault rushed into the room. A mist, like the darkness of death, came over the eyes of Amauri; he staggered back against the wall, and continued to thrust, from the mere force of habit, without aim and without strength. By and by, he imagined that, mingling in the combat, some strange forms, in Asiatic costume, glided before and around him like figures in a dream. But soon he was awakened, although only for a moment, into entire sensibility, by a sudden and excruciating pain; and he found himself lying on the floor, amidst several dead and dying men, both French and Saracens. The finger on which he had worn his mistress's ring had been half-cut, half-wrenched from his hand, and a torrent of blood was issuing from the wound, which speedily returned him to insensibility.

When his soul again awoke, the scene had changed. The whole had vanished like a hideous dream, which we only remember in a vague impression of hate and horror, while the details of the circumstance are completely lost. He was lying extended upon a couch, so soft that it hardly seemed to be woven of the gross objects of touch. Some low and shadowy tones of music, faint, but not distant, dropped with monotonous sweetness upon his ear. The air was rich with perfume, pungent, however, rather than heavy; and the wounded man felt every moment more strongly the efforts of the principle of life as it rallied within him.

At length he was able to turn his head upon the pillow, and looked round upon a scene, which he half imagined to lie in one of the many mansions of eternal bliss. The first object which dissipated this thought, was a large golden crucifix lying broken and trampled on the ground; and the Pilgrim of St. James, with holy horror, attempted to sign the cross upon the coverlet, as he muttered an anathema against the authors of the sacrilege. Other articles of riches, also, but more apparently of the East than of the

West, cumbered the apartment. Bale was piled upon bale of cloths of gold, silver, and silk, and skins of vair, ermine, gris, and other valuable furs; and vases of precious metals, candlesticks and candelabras, splendid dresses, and other articles of luxury and magnificence, lay scattered in confusion around. The place was lighted by a single lamp of massive gold, fed with perfumed oil; and on the side next the couch the flame was shaded by a fan made of the plumage of the bird of Paradise. Every thing testified enormous wealth, but also fear, haste, and confusion; and when at length Amauri's senses, accommodating themselves to the scene, were able to take cognisance of the want of windows, both in the walls and roof of the apartment, and of a dull and indefinite, but unequal, sound, rolling as if at a distance above, he perceived that he was in some place of subterranean refuge, excavated for the protection of the lives and riches of a native family of distinction.

Presently the door opened, slowly and noiselessly, and, shading a taper with her hand, a female form appeared, that might more easily have been imagined to be that of a denizen of the heaven of Mahommed, than one of his votaries on earth. She was just on that threshold of time by which the girl steps into womanhood; and in her virgin eyes might be read the troubled spirit of her years, when the young heart, trembling half with hope and half with fear, looks back with joy and yet regret, and forward with distrust, mingled with delight.

Her unveiled face, without one vestige of colour, was fair to a marvel, while that of a European, in such circumstances, would have been merely pale; and yet it was impossible to say in what the delicate difference consisted, or in what way the warm blood of the East manifested itself to the eye without the sensible presence of colour. She extinguished the taper, and advanced on tip-toe towards the couch. While she moved, Amauri imagined that he felt the approach of the lovely vision in the increasing richness of the air, which oppressed him even to faintness, and he fixed his feeble eyes on her face till they ached with beauty.

She bent down over the couch; but the lids of Amauri's eyes

closed beneath her gentle breath, and she imagined him to be still senseless, or asleep. How long she gazed in his face, he did not know; for a kind of intoxication came over his senses. It was no longer a living denizen of the earth that bent over him, but a phantom-shape, whose beauty had budded in Paradise. Sometimes he detected a strange resemblance to Adelaide in the face which he now saw only with his mind's eye; and sometimes a more real likeness of the shrieking female whom he had endeavoured to preserve brought back upon his soul confused associations of strife and pain. But over all was thrown, singularly mingled with his other imaginations, an undefined feeling of religious horror; and at length, as his faculties became more unsettled, he believed himself to be in some idolatrous temple, where the goddess herself, with her foot on the sacred crucifix, attempted to win him from his salvation with the smiles of her immortal beauty.

The delirium of fever ended in a long sleep; during which the mysterious and benignant power which the physicians, in the superstition of science, imagine to reside in their medicines—but which, in reality, moves and hath its being in the constitution of man—struggled triumphantly with the angel of death, whose wings were already closing over his victim. Amauri again opened his eyes; the same sweet tinkling of music dropped soothingly into his ear, and the same beautiful form bent over his pillow. But, broken and prostrate no more, the golden crucifix was raised up on high before him; and when his eyes sought reverently the symbol of his faith, the Pagan girl turned away her head, and prayed silently to the Supreme God of both.

By degrees the shade was removed from the lamp, the music became more distinct, and her voice, echoed by the harp-strings, broke into the articulate melody of song. But even then, when returning strength in the patient would fain have employed itself in speech, a glance of the begging eye, and a finger on the glistening lip, reproved his curiosity. The interdict, however, was at last removed, but slowly and gradually; and Amauri spoke, and the Saracen maiden answered.

Her story was short and simple. Her father, an emir* of great distinction, had been murdered by the Christians on their entrance into Damietta; and the family, under the conduct of her only brother, had taken refuge in the subterranean holds, which the insecurity of life and property under a tyrannical government, had taught the wealthier inhabitants to construct beneath their houses.† Her brother having one day been long absent, she had ventured, in alarm for his safety, to ascend to the surface of the earth, where she was seen at the lattice by a knight, who stole round and seized her before she was aware of his approach.

"To thee, brave Christian," she continued, "I owe my preservation. Summoned by the noise, some slaves of the family came to die, and in vain, for their mistress. The ruffians, believing that thou also wert dead, cut off one of thy fingers, for the sake of a ring from which it would not otherwise part; and with me, their wretched, living booty, departed from the place of slaughter. Scarcely, however, had we gained the middle of the court when my brave brother returned. The ravishers were beaten, although the chief villain escaped, and I, Christian, was rescued, to devote my life to the preservation of the generous stranger who saved my honour." When the Saracen maiden had ended her narrative, she sunk on one knee and kissed the wounded knight's hand; but rising suddenly, she withdrew some paces from the couch, and covered her face with her veil.

There was a singular mixture of deep feeling and almost childish

* Or *amir*, an Arabic word, signifying "lord," supposed by Du Cange to be the root of our "admiral," which is taken proximately from the Latin of the middle ages, "*amirabiles*." "*Amiral*" is used by Joinville and others to signify the governor of a province or officer in an army, as well as a commander at sea.

† "The manner of the Sultan's acting towards them was, that whenever any one of the knights of the *hauleca* had, by his prowess and chivalry, gained a sufficiency, so that he was no longer in want, and could live independent, the Sultan, for fear he should dethrone or kill him, had him arrested and thrown into prison, where he was secretly put to death, and then took possession of all the fortune his wife or children might have had left to them."—Joinville.

playfulness in this young infidel, which at once amused and interested Amauri. Her gratitude was boundless. She nursed him as a mother nurses her sick child ; she strove to anticipate his very wishes ; and when one of her anxious glances caught his face, her own returned like a mirror the expression of sadness or content which it found. Having accidentally imbibed many of the finer accomplishments of the Arabs, she sung to him, read to him, and recited stories for his amusement, which he often believed to proceed extempore from her fertile imagination. Notwithstanding all this, however, and the overpowering lustre of her Oriental beauty, Amauri, strong in his love and his religion, never looked upon her with a thought derogatory to his lost Adelaide. He loved her, but only as a brother loves his sister and, indeed, in the knightly faith of the time, it would have been a kind of double impiety, an affront at once to "his God and his lady," to have thought of her as any thing more.

He frequently saw some of the servants, and once or twice a rough looking man, in the dress of a Bedoun, entered the apartment. The brother, however, never appeared, and Amauri, concluding that his visits abroad were made in disguise, was withheld by delicacy from asking any questions on the subject.

He was at length sufficiently recovered to return into the world. His young nurse did not oppose his wishes, and the following day was fixed as the time when he should take leave of this subterranean palace and its Pagan mistress. During the interval, she neither sung nor read. She seemed unquiet, almost agitated, and would frequently start up, and hasten to the other end of the room, as if looking for something, or hearkening for some expected sound. At length the hour arrived, and Amauri once more equipped himself in his armour, and prepared to go forth. Aza timidly approached him.

"Christian," said she, "rings, I fear, are fatal gifts to thee, but, if thou wilt run the risk, here is one that will serve as a token to remind thee of the hours of thy sickness, and of one who strove to make them seem less dreary."

"Aza!" cried the knight, looking with astonishment and admi-

ration at the most splendid gem he had ever seen, or even imagined, "this is no token of remembrance, but a diamond fit to serve for the dowry of a queen. I cannot accept of such presents; for I am too poor to make an adequate return. Give me but a lock of your beautiful hair, and a kiss of your beautiful hand, and I will maintain, with my sword or my lance, against all gainsayers, that you are the fairest, best, and gentlest damsel in the East!"

"Poor!" said Aza musingly; "and art thou poor? 'Art thou not a prince in thy own country?"

"Alas, no; I am but a wandering knight, and the inheritor of no other patrimony than my father's sword."

"I thought thou hadst been a royal prince!" said Aza; but the next moment she withdrew her eyes suddenly, and a slight tinge of colour rose into her face.

"Though thou art poor, however," she continued, "a rich jewel will not harm thee. I am the mistress here; and thou, who hast hitherto obeyed me so well, shalt not discard thy allegiance, at least, till thou hast passed the threshold. Take it. Christian, there was a name, a sweet, an only name, that hovered on thy delirious lips—Adelaide! Ha! is it so? Thy cheek is eloquent, although thy tongue is mute. I judged aright. The ring is for her. Now, go in peace." Amauri pressed her hand between his. The tell-tale colour faded in his cheek, and a pang passed across his heart, he knew not why, or of what nature, as the last accents of her voice fell mournfully and tenderly upon his ear. She followed him up the subterranean stairs, and to the gate of the court. When at some distance, he looked round, and she was still there. He paused for an instant, before turning a corner which would hide her from his view; he thought he heard her call him back: "Amauri! Amauri!" said the voice. It was fancy; for the form was still motionless at the gate; and Amauri "passed on his way, and saw her no more."

Passing near the church of Our Lady of Damietta,* he would

* A mosque which was consecrated to the honour of the Virgin by St Louis — Joinville. It had undergone the same ceremony at the earlier capture of the town. — Jacques de Vitry.

have entered to return thanks to God for his mercy, but the access was difficult, owing to a vast crowd assembled round the doors.

Still languid from the effects of his wounds, and his heart oppressed with a natural sadness at parting with one so truly his friend, he forbore to question the spectators as to the cause; but continued for some time to wander aloof from the press, and to endeavour, by turning his thoughts to his religious duties, to soothe the anxious but undefined feelings that stirred his heart. He at length perceived a motion among the persons nearest the great door; tumultuous cries resounded on all sides, and a lane was formed from the entrance of the church through the body of the crowd. The ceremony, whatever it might be, was over; and already some officers, clearing the way, were observed issuing from the building.

As Amauri approached the crowd for the purpose of gratifying his curiosity, he recognised the cry of his rival's followers, "St. Mary de Varennes!" and this was followed, or rather mingled with that of the house of St. Paul, "Montjoye a Chastillon!"* A cold thrill shot through the heart of the pilgrim, he knew not why; and he felt his sight grow dim, as if he was about to faint. The next moment, however, the principal personage of the ceremony, Sir Renault, made his appearance, and the shouting was renewed with deafening clamour. A rush was made to the door, and the eager populace seemed as if they would have pierced through the walls with their eyes.

"The bride! the bride!" they shouted. "She comes! she comes!" and Adelaide de St. Paul appeared at the door, led forth by her husband.

She stepped gravely, and, it was thought, proudly, through the throng. She seemed neither to hear their clamour, nor to see their gestures of applause and gratulation; her eyes were fixed, and her face colourless; and so calm, and lofty, and coldly

* The *cris d'armes* were sometimes shouted on festive occasions as well as in battle.

beautiful did she appear, that one might have imagined her to be some marble idol, led out of the temple to be presented to the worship of her votaries.

Amauri did not mark her pride, her coldness, or her beauty. When convinced, by one thunder-stroke of her identity, his heart grew cold and his eyes dark ; and staggering backwards, he sank senseless on the ground.

When he recovered, the crowd had passed by, all 'except a solitary Bedouin, who stood near him, with his arms folded in his pelisse of coarse hair-cloth, gazing with mingled pity and contempt upon the prostrate knight. Amauri doubted for a moment whether the procession he had witnessed had not been a dream ; for some strange associations with the subterranean vault, suggested by the uncouth and shaggy figure before him, at first almost persuaded his confused senses that he was still in the abode of Aza.

"Christian," said the Bedouin, in a rich, manly voice, which but ill corresponded with the squalidness of his exterior, "thou lovest yonder newly-married dame—she of the queenly step and the marble face? Dost thou not?"

"I did! I do!" replied Amauri, hardly aware that he was answering to any other interrogatory than that of his own heart.

"And she has deceived thee? She hast broken her troth—she has played thee false?"

"Slave, thou liest!" cried Amauri, starting up suddenly, and striking the Bedouin a violent blow upon the face. "She is as true as Heaven, though in the snares of hell!" The Arab fell back a few paces, and, as if with an habitual gesture, threw open his pelisse, and grasped the handle of a Turkish scimeter which hung by his side. After a momentary struggle, however, during which his lip grew pale with passion—

"The will of God be done!" he muttered. "This is not much in addition to what I have already borne ; and in forgiving here I cancel a debt. Christian," he continued, aloud, "we are now on equal terms. Beware of the next insult, lest I turn and rend thee!" And having so spoken, he gathered his shaggy pelisse

around him, and disappeared in the path of the nuptial procession.

Amauri walked to his quarters in a state little short of insanity. Adelaide in Egypt! Here was a solution of the problem which had for so long a time perplexed his life. Aware of the stratagem her father intended to resort to for the purpose of preventing his return to the château, she had sent him her ring as a parting token of love and truth; she had desired that the Lord de Varennes should remain in France, because she herself intended to proceed with the crusade to the Holy Land; and no doubt, in order to prevent interruption to her plans, she had concealed from her father to the last moment the invitation to join the royal party, which she had perhaps herself solicited from the Queen. Finally, on arriving in the Nile, she had given him to understand her presence by the alteration in the legend of his pennon, "*Elle vous voit.*" What infinite calamities had his wounds, and consequent confinement in the subterranean chamber, produced! How easily might all things have been explained, by even a moment's interview with his mistress, after their arrival in Egypt! It was in vain to reflect that the cause of all his misery had been such an act of chivalrous generosity as would no doubt be pleasing to the heavenly patrons of his profession: in a lesser evil this might have been a consolation, but in the present there was none—the gates of hope were shut—Adelaide was married!

At one time he determined to throw himself at the feet of the King, describe his wrongs, accuse his enemy of falsehood and treachery, and demand a judicial combat; but, recollecting that Louis had proscribed this mode of judgment throughout his dominions, and that in the new process of trial by peers, his case would be either unsusceptible of proof, or disposed of by jurors corrupted by the money and influence of both the families of Varennes and Saint Paul, he abandoned the plan in despair. After a long and stormy mental debate, he at last concluded, as the misfortune was now evidently beyond retrieve, that to open the eyes of Adelaide would only be to deliver her over to repentance and misery; and he determined, on the occasion of the next

battle, to run a course alone against the Saracen lines, and, by dying on their spears, to secure a happiness in Heaven which he despaired of on earth.*

He was received by his men-at-arms as one returned from the grave, where it was supposed he had long lain ; but no one had time to inquire into the details of his adventures, for the army had that moment received sudden orders to march towards Babylon, and all was hurry and confusion.

Soon the confusion became "worse confounded" near the quarters of Amauri, where the troops of St. Paul and Varennes were mustered together,—for the banneret was nowhere to be found. Messengers were hurried distractedly through the camp and the town—the muster-call was sounded at every turning ; and at length an enormous reward offered for tidings respecting the absent chief. All was unavailing. He had been observed, when the procession was on its return from the church, to step aside with a stranger, in a narrow part of the street, as if to listen to some official communication. The crowd passed on, and it was supposed by those near the bride, that Sir Renault was behind, and by those behind, that he had returned to his place. From that moment he had not been seen or heard of.

Amauri's heart beat wildly at the news ; but it was only for an instant. To suppose that so powerful a lord had been murdered in open day, and in a part of the town crowded at the moment with his adherents, was ridiculous. Sir Renault, wherever he might be, was, no doubt, absent with his own consent ; and he was probably, even now, engaged in intrigues connected with the public affairs, the result of which might be expected every moment to be made manifest. The excitement, however, produced by the intelligence, had had the effect of stirring up new thoughts in

* The case of the bishop, described in a former note, will show the prevalence both of the theory and practice. St. Louis himself, according to Joinville, was only withheld by his attendants from spurring alone against the Saracen host ; and even the Infidels were actuated by quite as fierce a phrenzy—for, on the landing of the banner of St. Denis, one of them rode against the party full speed, and was cut to pieces.

Amauri's mind. He remembered the magnificent ring which Aza had intended for Adelaide ; and, although the unhappy lover full well knew that it was only as *his* bride she was entitled to receive it, he determined with his own hands to present the gift.

The Lady de Varennes was alone. She had some hours before received intelligence of her lord's mysterious disappearance ; and, after having been duly wearied with the hopes and comfortable assurances of her friends, had at last, when the theme was exhausted, been left to the indulgence of her grief. This grief was not exhibited in the usual forms. She neither wept nor fainted ; her pale cheek became no paler ; and her cold, bright eyes waxed not warmer nor dimmer. She listened calmly, and so replied ; and when the comforters had left her, she remained standing on the same spot where she had bid them adieu, as if forgetting to sit down. When an attendant came in to say that a knight was without who desired to speak with her, she merely signed her acquiescence with an inclination of the head. The attendant then retired, and Sir Amauri entered the room.

Her eyes were fixed upon him when he entered, and she did not withdraw their gaze, nor appear startled at what must have seemed an apparition of the dead. But there was something so strange in that long, still look, that Amauri, as he approached, felt his heart quake and his limbs tremble. Soon, with a slight start, she passed her hand before her eyes, as if to drive away some habitual illusion of the brain. Her agitation increased, and an indescribable horror began to gather in her look. At last, she threw up her arms, drew in her breath with a deep inspiration, and a visible and audible shudder shook her frame.

When Amauri, speechless with emotion, made another step forward—for he had paused aghast in his approach—she clasped her hands suddenly together, and a shriek appeared to be in the act of bursting from her frozen lips. With a struggle, however, the fierceness of which was apparent in the convulsive heaving of her breast, she subdued the weakness : her recollection gradually returned ; a burning blush broke over her marble countenance, suffusing brow, neck, and bosom ; she drew herself up for a

moment to her full majestic height ; and then falling undulatingly back in a graceful, yet haughty obeisance, appeared to wait her visitor's commands.

"Madam," said Amauri, "I fear I have surprised you. I did not advert to the report of my death—which you, no doubt, believed as well as others. I come not, however, to speak of myself—that is past—past!"—and the voice of the knight faltered, and he appeared for some moments to have forgotten the object of his visit.

"I am only too happy to find," remarked the Lady de Varennes, in a steady tone, "that the most holy Cross has still so brave a defender on the earth."

"And that, also, will soon be past!" resumed Amauri. "However, I come not to speak of myself;—my errand will soon be sped. I have been commissioned, I know not wherefore, by a lady—a princess, I think, among this Pagan people—to present to you this ring ; and, from its extraordinary value, I deemed that, in deputing the task to other hands, I should but ill discharge the task confided to me."

"It is a rich bauble," remarked Adelaide, coldly ; "intended, I have no doubt, for my mistress the Queen, for whom I may possibly have been mistaken. I would pray you to take the trouble of delivering it yourself ; but, in the mean time, I embrace the opportunity of thanking you for the honourable restitution of a less valuable ring, which the mistake of my page left in your possession."

"Your thanks are wasted," said Amauri ; "I intended no restitution, honourable or otherwise—curses on the weak hand which could not hold what it had obtained!"

"How ! What ! I understand you not!" Amauri held up his dismembered hand ; and Adelaide, whose pride had conquered the terrors of a supposed supernatural visitation, fell forward, as if suddenly struck by a mortal blow, and fainted in her lover's arms.

"Adelaide !" cried Amauri, as she re-opened her eyes and gazed into his face : "look not upon me with that terrible glance, which drinks the life-blood of my veins, and withers my very

soul! I sought not this; I call God and Saint James to witness! I believed you, in spite of all, to be as pure and holy as Heaven itself; and I may have wished—I confess I did wish—that you should not deem me quite—quite base, and unworthy a place even in your memory. Awake! arise! but be not too soon happy; think of me yet a little while—it is all I ask. I go whence I shall never return, and where I shall die with your name on my lips—my loved, my lost, my first, last earthly hope”—and the young and gallant soldier, forgetting the customary pride of manhood, leant his face on her shoulder, and wept convulsively.

But a few broken words on either side sufficed to prove to Adelaide that she had been the victim of duplicity and villainy; and to Amauri, that his mistress, after being thoroughly convinced, first, of his falsehood, and then of his death, had only yielded, shudderingly, a reluctant hand to what she conceived to be her duty, as the sole child and heiress of the ancient house of St. Paul.

“It is enough,” said Adelaide, at the close of this painful interview; “we know our fate, and let us not add bitterness to its bitterness through any fault of ours. Farewell, Amauri! I know that, even without my poor counsel, you will forget the rash and fatal resolution at which you have hinted, and only remember that you are a sworn pilgrim of the Cross, and that He who first bore it laid not down the burthen before the appointed time. Farewell! our souls will sometimes meet at the gate of Heaven—and if on earth no more”—but here her voice was choked, and her tears fell fast. Amauri clasped her in his arms, and would have printed a kiss of passion and despair upon her lips. She resisted for a moment, but at last yielding:

“Well,” said she, “it is the first—and last. There—go, now, brother of my heart even from the cradle! Tarry not, turn not, look not! Go, soul of honour! my good, my true, my brave! and may Heaven reward you for a love which Adelaide can never acknowledge on earth!”

When he had gained the door, he turned round to look upon her for the last time. Her arms were still extended towards him,

and immortal love sat enthroned among tears in her eyes. She waved him away; and even as the first man shrunk from the angel's sword, he went forth from her presence, and left his lost paradise behind.

CHAPTER IV.

Amors est-il malz? est-il biens?

AGNES DE BRAGELONGNE.

THE army of the crusaders, on their route towards Babylon, was encamped on an island between two branches of the Nile, that flow towards Rexi and Damietta. It was the purpose of Louis to cross the former branch, which he attempted to do by constructing a causeway through the stream; but the Saracens, who were assembled in great force to oppose him, employed themselves with equal pertinacity in undermining and digging away the banks on their side; so that, in spite of the advance of the French works, the width of the passage remained the same.* The men employed on the causeway were defended by two chas-chateils, in the covered galleries of which they could carry on their operations in comparative security, while the beffrois in front of these machines were manned with chosen bowmen, who kept up a constant fire upon the enemy.† The perplexity into which the Christians were thrown by this delay, was increased by an attack made upon their rear by the Saracen general, who had

* Joinville.

* The *beffroy* (belfry) was a wooden tower of several stories, and is thus described in the Romance of Garin:—

Un engin fet, de tel parler n'oï,
Qui ot de haut cent piés tos enterins,
Près de la porte fist venir tels engins,
A set estages tot droit de fust chesnin,
Arbalestriers a mis jusqu'à vint,
Bien fit cloés, couvert de cuir boli.

The word was afterward applied to the highest towers of frontier towns,

sent part of his army round by the pass of Damietta ; and in a little while their situation and prospects altogether became far from comfortable.

Sir Amauri, although, in compliance with Adelaide's manifest wishes, he had refrained from carrying into effect his desperate intentions, yet displayed such tokens of reckless, and sometimes apparently aimless courage, in the rencontres with the enemy, that already he was looked upon as a very remarkable person, and consulted and employed on occasions of moment by the King himself. Till now, he might be said to have been unknown in the war ; for, with the exception of his first brilliant but momentary appearance on the infidel coast, at the debarkation of the troops, he had not been seen in arms. When the question of "Who is he?" however, had led to his identification with the youthful knight who had vanquished in single combat the veteran Lord de Varennes, the public curiosity by no means rested there. Whispers went abroad with regard to his connexion with the family of St. Paul, and his love for the Lady Adelaide ; surmises were indulged in on the subject of his long disappearance, the agitation of the damsel at the altar during the ceremony, and her despair when it was over ; and strange suspicions, at last, were hinted, as to Amauri's knowledge of the real fate of Sir Renault ; even implying a charge of guilty participation, on the part of the bride herself, in what, by this time, seemed to most people a crime—whether extending so far as murder or not—which could only have been committed by the direct agency, or at least complicity of the Christians.

where a sentinel was stationed to strike a bell on any alarm ; and it now means simply the place in a church or other building where the great bell is hung. The *chas*, or cats, were made in the form of covered galleries :—

— testudo textitur, ut sub

Illis tuto latens muri queat ima subire

Fossor, et erectis ipsum succidere parmis.

William le Breton. In the text they are called, after the Lord de Joinville, *chas-chateils*—*cati castellati*, as Du Cange interprets, or castellated cats, because of the towers or beffrois which defended them.

The knight was not long ignorant of the idle and mischievous rumours that were abroad. Already his heart had begun to beat again with the warm hopes of youth ; the longings of his ambition had returned ; and the virgin-widow had risen upon his dreams, no more a phantom of despair, but a harbinger of love and joy. But the glorious picture, which had spread itself in colours of gold and purple upon his imagination, was now overcast ; and the foul breath of calumny and malice wandered over its bosom, like the mists that obscure the dawn. It was necessary for his fame, and for what was of still more importance, the fame of Adelaide, that the real fate of the Lord de Varennes should be clearly ascertained : without this, victory would be joyless, and triumph turned to defeat ; for he would no more dare to present himself to the eyes of his high-spirited mistress. Tormented by these thoughts, which preyed upon his soul, and shrinking in disgust from the heartless companions to whom he had become an object, at once, of envy and suspicion, action at length became wearisome, and life itself a burthen.

One gloomy afternoon he wandered away from the camp towards a more solitary quarter of the island, where the voices of war, softened by distance, seemed not more harsh than the evening music of the river. He threw himself down on a bank which overhung the dark waters of the Nile, and fixed his eyes vacantly upon the tumbling surges—shaping, no doubt, their lights and shadows, their bubbles and their foam, into the phantasmagoria which the mind knows how to conjure up in spaces vacant of the objects that address themselves more immediately to our senses and instincts.

He had not rested long, when his attention was attracted by a man wandering, like himself, from the camp, but with a more definite purpose in view. He carried on his shoulders a large coil of netting, and was apparently a fisher, come to ply his evening trade in the Nile. The man, when he had reached the bank where Amauri lay, unrolled the coil, and flung the leads with Herculean force one by one into the river ; and when the

apparatus was completely arranged, sat down in silence upon the turf, and gazed upon the floats.

There was nothing very striking in this scene ; and yet Amauri, straying from reflection to reflection, began to look with interest upon the occupation of the fisherman. At a moment when the armies of Europe were in the midst of the land, and the very existence of his country, as a nation, was threatened, this poor infidel pursued his harmless trade, within the very sights and sounds of the war, apparently caring not and knowing not who were conquerors or who were conquered ! He was in the dress of a Bedouin ; but the costume, which a short time ago would have made Amauri start with emotion, had now become familiar to his eyes ; for a great part of the vagabonds of the camp were of this class of Arabs, who, undirected either by moral principle or local attachment, followed indiscriminately whomsoever it was their interest to serve or to annoy.*

"What must I give you," said Amauri at last, willing to do an act of charity, for the Bedouin appeared to be in wretched poverty—"what must I give you for the cast of your net ? A few fish methinks would be no bad fare for supper."

"I shall catch no fish here," answered the Bedouin.

"Indeed !" said Amauri in surprise ; "that must be owing, then, to your want of skill ; for surely God has not made this river in vain. At any rate, if you think thus, it is foolish to waste your time in a hopeless pursuit."

"It is thou who art foolish," said the Bedouin calmly, without turning his head, "to reason so rashly on the things of a strange country. Know, Christian, that this river descends from the terrestrial paradise beyond the Mountains of the Moon, and brings with it, by the mercy of God, some part of the spices that grow

* The Lord de Joinville was surprised to find the Bedouins, who were subjects of the Saracens, entering and pillaging the camp of the latter after a defeat ; but he was told "that it was their usual custom to fall on the weakest, which is the nature of dogs ; for when there is one dog pursued by another, and a shouting made after him, all the other dogs fall on him."—Hist. De St. Louis,

there, and which are blown from the trees, as in our forests the wind shakes off the old dry wood.* In an hour or two of time thou shalt see in my nets divers pieces of cinnamon, ginger, rhubarb, cloves, lignum-aloes, and other precious things, with the perfume of paradise fresh upon them. These spices I sell to the merchants for gold; and so I get my living, when caprice or casualty has driven me from the desert into this wilderness of men."

"I would fain see these things with my eyes," said the pilgrim; "but even now I must be gone, for the night is coming down dark and sullenly upon the earth, and the hour of my watch upon the chas-chateils is at hand."

"I could tell thee," continued the fisherman, "of a journey made by command of the Sultan, to explore the sacred sources of the river, and how the path of the travellers was stopped by a mountain of perpendicular cliffs, over which plunged the perfumed waters; and how those unattainable summits were clothed with gigantic trees, between whose trunks a thousand strange wild beasts—lions, serpents, elephants—gazed down upon the wanderers of the earth."†

"Tell me no more for the present," interrupted Amauri; "I hear the signal—good night. I shall come some other time to watch the fortunes of your net." And he hastened away, regretting that he had suffered the moment to elapse in which he should have mounted guard.

He had nearly gained the camp, when, on passing a stunted bush close by the river side, the fisherman, whom he had thought he had left behind, stood suddenly before him.

"Mount not guard to-night!" said he, turning his eyes upon the pilgrim as he crossed his path; and Amauri, with a thrill of surprise, recognised the features of the Bedouin whom he had encountered near the church of Notre Dame de Damietta, on the most memorable day of his existence. As soon as he recovered his presence of mind, he bounded after him to demand the meaning of the warning; and the fisherman, although he did not reply

* Joinville.

† Ibid.

to his shout, seemed not unwilling to be overtaken, for he moved on without apparent haste. Amauri followed for some time, in the idea that he was gaining upon his mysterious counsellor ; but at length, as the shades of night fell thicker around, and the calmly gliding figure, although not more distant, became more indistinct, he paused in sudden awe, as a thought swept across his mind that he was in the train of some phantom of the island—some evil fisher of men, whose purpose was to lead him to destruction.

The next moment, however, a more earthly suspicion occurred to him. This man, although his recollection of having seen him in the subterranean chamber was indistinct, was in all probability a retainer of the family of the murdered emir, and, therefore, at once an enemy to the Christians, and a friend to Amauri. His warning, therefore, could only relate to some meditated blow of the Saracens, from which he wished to preserve the friend of his patrons ; and as the idea struck the young soldier, he turned suddenly round and rushed towards the camp.

The thought of his inattention to what seemed now so plain, from his recollection of the Bedouin's otherwise unaccountable desire to detain him on the bank, haunted Amauri like guilt as he ran ; and every blast of the signal horn, which came with a soft and melancholy swell upon his ear, startled him like an alarm. His memory traced resemblances and connexions in things the most fantastically dissimilar, till the figure of the Bedouin floated before him like the evil genius of his destiny. It had glided about his couch like a shadow in the subterranean chamber, that grave of his earthly happiness ; it had mocked and taunted him at the moment when the knell of hope was sounding in his ears. What could mean this new visitation but to blast his name with the infamy of desertion—perhaps of treason, at a moment fraught with danger and fate ? There even seemed, in the feverish sensibility of his imagination, to be some connexion between the stranger and the disappearance of Sir Renault de Varennes, which took place about the very moment when the former might have reached the place in the procession occupied by the principal parties ; and Amauri determined, if ever they should again encounter, to wrest

from him, by fair or foul means, a secret which had become so important to his honour and happiness.

All seemed to be in customary security in the part of the camp through which he passed; and before giving the alarm respecting a danger so indefinite, and perhaps so altogether illusory, he determined to proceed to his post at the chas-chateils and ascertain that the watch was kept with at least the usual precautions.

Everything was in due military order. The sentries challenged as he passed, and the knights in the beffrois hailed their comrade from the different stages of the towers. He was about to enter one of these huge machines, for the purpose of looking across the dark river towards the Saracen camp, when some one behind touched his arm.

"Christian," said the Bedouin, "thou wouldest speak with me; lo, here am I!" Amauri grasped him by the throat.

"I would indeed speak with you," said he; "and by the holy rood! you shall answer me again! Say, first, why you warned me not to keep my watch here this night?"

"Because I judged from the darkness of the night, and the noise of the tumbling surges, that it might be deemed a proper time by the enemies of the Cross for an attack upon your chas-chateils, in which, it appears, I have been mistaken."

"Say, again, what interest have you in my preservation?"

"Thou art the preserver of Aza, and, as such, thy life is even as a precious jewel to the slaves of her house."

"Now tell me, and then pass on your way in peace: Know you aught of the Lord de Varennes?"

"I do," said the Bedouin; "but"—and his voice sunk into a whisper—"I may not discourse of such matters, surrounded as we are now by ears which, as thou knowest well, distort before they reflect the sound which enters them. Follow me, or drag me, if you will, only twenty yards down the banks of the river, and my lips shall not be silent."

"I distrust you, Pagan," said Amauri, after hesitating for a moment; "this is my post, which I cannot leave with honour, and

even here you shall answer me, if I dig the secret out of your heart with my dagger."

"Dig!" said the Bedouin, throwing open his pelisse; "thou wilt find plenty of the true blood of the desert for thy pains.

What! art thou a knight clad in armour from head to heel, and afraid of a wandering Arab, defended by nothing more than his linen robe, and cloak of hair-cloth!"

"Peasant, I fear nothing," said Amauri, "save the fleetness of your foot. Go on; but keep, as we walk, within the length of my lance, or, I swear by St. James! you shall feel its point!"

They walked together in silence till the chas-chateils had disappeared in the darkness. Some specks of light were visible here and there in the camp; but no sound was heard, save the ceaseless rush of the black waters beside them, mingled with the low, moaning voice of the wind which swept in fitful gusts over the river.

"Hold!" said Amauri, seizing his companion's arm; "we are now far enough for secrecy, if that be your purpose; speak quickly, and to the point!"

"Christian," said the Bedouin, in a slow, deliberate tone, "thou hast twice insulted me, and I have twice forgiven thee, for the sake of Aza. Thou wouldst have more, however, than forgiveness—thou demandest a secret which is not mine to give. This, methinks, is unreasonable."

"Slave!" cried Amauri, "I will not be trifled with. For what purpose have you led me here, if not to impart the information I seek?"

"For the purpose of informing thee in what manner thou shalt obtain it. Listen. It shall come to pass, that when the Christians have at length crossed the river, they shall proceed straight on to the plains of Babylon, through the town of Massoura. In this town there stands a house, in the middle of a great square, through which the army shall pass; and it shall seem to thee even as the house of an emir, or a prince among the Saracen people. Enter thou within the gates, and fear nothing: for there thou shalt receive a token of the gratitude of Aza, and of either the life or

death of the Lord de Varennes, which thou must deliver to his bride in the presence of the King of the Christians."

There was an air of sincerity in the manner, and a calm seriousness in the voice of the Arab, which, taken in conjunction with the wildness of his words, almost startled Amauri. The ideas of romance, however, that are associated with foreign lands in the imagination of unfrequent travellers, together with the minuteness of the picture conveyed, which is usually considered to form an indication of truth, so far disposed the listener to belief, that it was with little of the appearance of doubt that he demanded—

"How shall I know that you do not mean to deceive me?"

"Dost thou demand a sign?" said the Arab, fiercely. "Behold!" and, extending his arm, he pointed across the river. Amauri looked, but his eye could not penetrate the darkness; and, on turning again to his companion, he could scarcely repress a sensation of superstitious fear, as he gazed upon his picturesque figure, the outlines of which were almost lost in the gloom, standing motionless beside him.

"Behold!" cried the Arab again; and as Amauri looked again, and beheld nothing, save the dark and indefinite surface of the river, and the clouds of thick darkness that encompassed the opposite bank, his self-possession began to return, and he made a stride towards the Bedouin, for the purpose of seizing him.

"Behold!" cried the latter yet a third time; and, at the word, the sky before them was illumined by a flash that seemed to sweep round half the horizon. An interval of a moment ensued; but ere the sudden brightness had sunk into eclipse, an immense ball of fire, tailed like a comet, rushed with the noise of thunder over the river.* The camp was seen in the blaze as distinctly as at noon-day; and the chas-chateils, struck by the fateful bolt, after, for some time, appearing to vomit up the flames that consumed them, sunk, with a shudder that shook the air, into a heap of ruins and ashes. The portentous light faded, but more slowly than it arose, in the sky and on the earth; and at length nothing was visible

* Joinville.

save a column of lurid flame rising from the spot where the chateails had stood.*

All this passed in the compass of a few seconds, and Amauri was as much stunned as if the destroying element had fallen upon his head. When at last he recovered in some measure his self-possession, and from a sentiment of duty stretched out his arms to seize the Bedouin, he felt sure that his hands would either fall upon empty air, or meet some object abhorrent to life and nature.

"What meanest thou by this violence?" demanded the Arab, who had not moved from his position.

"Sorcerer!" said the knight; "and if not sorcerer, spy and traitor! we part not till you are delivered to the headsman or the faggot.—Come on, for you shall this night render an account of your crimes, either to the King of France or the Legate of Rome!"

"The will of God be done!" said the Bedouin. "The innocent should fear no evil, and no man can avoid his destiny.—Lead on; for I will follow thee."

When Amauri and his prisoner had arrived at the royal tent, where the barons were already assembled to debate on this sudden ruin of the prospects of the campaign, they found all in confusion and dismay. Three times the earthly thunder of the Saracens broke upon the Christian camp; and three times St. Louis threw

* Joinville. The historian says that the fire was "like a large tun," and "seemed a great dragon of fire flying through the air." The Greek fire is supposed to have been invented by Callinicus of Heliopolis, and it was long preserved as a peculiar secret by the Greek nation.—Du Cange, notes on Villehardouin.—It was used in the siege of Paris by the Normans—See the "Adventures of Eriland," and it is described by Abbo, cited in that tale as the principal authority, as being composed of oil, wax, and pitch:—

"Addit eis oleum, ceramque picemque ministrans,
Mixta simul liquefacta foco ferventia valde."

Other authors, however, mention naphtha, sulphur, and bitumen as the materials; and, in fact, there is reason to suppose that many different compositions, possessing the same qualities, have been indiscriminately styled Greek fire.

himself upon his knees, and extending his arms to heaven, cried with a loud voice to our Lord for mercy and protection: "And, believe me," says a chronicler of the time, who was present, "his sincere prayers were of great service."* The knight had difficulty in gaining access, so great was the crowd of officers about the tent; but no sooner had he dropped some hints of the nature of his business, than the word passed from one to another, "A sorcerer! a sorcerer!" and, a lane being made, he entered, with his companion, into the presence of the King.

When he had described in a few plain words, avoiding as far as possible his own personal affairs, the suspicions he had conceived, and which tended to a charge either of sorcery or treachery against the prisoner, he thrust him forward into the light of the lamps, and all eyes were bent in alarm or scrutiny upon the infidel stranger.

"Unhappy being," asked King Louis, "art thou a sorcerer?" The Arab smiled grimly.

"Were I a sorcerer," said he, "ye should be my prisoners; not I yours."

"There is truth in that!" muttered some of the chiefs.

"Not so," said the Legate of Rome, who was present. "Were this reasoning admitted, no sorcerer could be condemned; but, I praise the most Holy Virgin, the servants of the Devil are at some period or other of their lives abandoned by their master; and at this very moment the same may be the case with him who now stands before us. I demand proof."

"Proof?" repeated the Arab haughtily. "Of what, and wherefore, do ye accuse me? Produce, first, your proof, and then I will answer with mine. I warned this Knight, some time before it happened, of an attack which I expected to be made upon your camp; let him deny it, if he dare!"

"He did—I deny it not," said Amauri; "but at the same time, by a means of a stratagem, which unhappily succeeded, he prevented me from giving the alarm."

* Joinville.

"O fool!" cried the Arab, "of what use would have been thy stay to give the alarm? Thy destruction would only have added another unit to the amount of the loss!"

"It is true," said Amauri; "he is no sorcerer, but a spy and a traitor."

"Christians!" exclaimed the Bedouin, advancing and extending his arm, "I am not a Saracen, but a wandering Arab—a son of the Desert. I acknowledge no country, save the spot of ground which is covered by my tent—no law, but that of strength or weakness—and no master, but my own interest. Ye think me your enemy; and truly I should be so for a sufficient hire: but as yet it is in your power, by the same means, to make me your friend. Your hopes of crossing the river are destroyed; your counsels are filled with confusion and dismay; ye know not whither to turn!—Come, I will show you a ford, where the black waters sweep swelling down, as if a mountain-depth were below, but yet where the daintiest knight of you all may cross over without wetting his stirrups!" A murmur of applause and exultation ran through the tent.

"Fellow, will you do this?" cried a dozen voices at once.

"Ay, for an hire!" shouted the Arab; "for five hundred golden besants, will I show you the ford."*

It is a common saying, that a man will grasp at a straw in cases of imminent and apparently unavoidable danger; and the Crusaders, in the present dilemma, did not hesitate to accept the Bedouin's offer. The caitiff, however, would not stir till the money was told down into his hand;† and his employers, on their part, returned the distrust, by guarding him to the spot like a prisoner led to execution. On Shrove Tuesday the encampment was broken up before the dawn, and the Christian army in march for the ford. On arriving at the place, the Arab was set upon horseback, behind a stout man-at-arms; while another, at each side, rode abreast, and the whole dashed into the river, followed by such knights and men-at-arms as were desirous of showing their valour.

* Joinville.

† Ibid.

The guide proved faithful ; and in a space of time surprisingly short, the whole army found themselves in safety on the opposite bank. The movement, however, was not unperceived by the enemy, for about three hundred Saracens were drawn up as if to receive them ; although, when these perceived the success of the attempt to ford, they turned horse and fled.

It had been the orders that the troops of the Templars should form the van ; but no sooner had the second division of the army, under the command of the King's brother, the Count d'Artois, found themselves on dry land, and saw the infidels flying before them, than, with an exulting shout, they stuck spurs into their horses and galloped after. The Templars, on their part, unwilling to be deprived of the place of honour in the march, made equal haste to regain it ; and the rear division, not caring to be left alone, scampered pell-mell behind them.*

The Count d'Artois, in whose division was the St. Paul party, dashed right through the town of Massoura, and as far as the plains of Babylon, cutting down the fugitives as they rode ; but there, finding themselves isolated from the army, they turned their horses, and rode back to rejoin the main body. On returning through Massoura, they were suddenly attacked by a shower of arrows and other missiles from the windows, while various bodies of Saracens crowded upon their lines, by the lanes and avenues of the town, and, with little risk to themselves, committed great slaughter.

Emerging at last into an open square, the Crusaders were able to draw up in order, and fight their enemies hand to hand. The engagement became hot and general ; and great numbers fell on both sides—among others, the brave Count d'Artois.†

Amauri, while passing through the narrow part of the streets, had twice caught a glimpse of the Bedouin ; but, engaged in the perilous task of fighting his way through a place where the very stones of the houses seemed all on a sudden turned into enemies, he had had no time to observe him. Here, however, he encountered this mysterious friend, or enemy, for the third time—on foot no more,

* Joinville.

† Ibid.

but mounted on a superb charger. Amauri, at the instant, was beset by several Saracens at once, who seemed, by some unaccountable caprice, to have marked him out for a peculiar prey; and, while thinking of little else than how to sell his life as dearly as possible, was instantaneously dragged from his saddle by the grasp of some one who rode up behind him.

He could not possibly have recognised the Bedouin but for the cloak and turban which he still wore. The disguise, whatever might have been its nature, which had given his countenance the appearance of at least middle age, was removed, and he appeared to be a man in the very spring of his youth and vigour. As he looked down into Amauri's face, the latter detected a resemblance in his fine bright eyes, and dark brown cheek, and even in the proud curl of his bearded lip, to the features of the gentle and beautiful Aza; and he became convinced that the stranger was her brother.

"Wretch!" said he, "were it not for the likeness which you bear, I would give my dearest hopes on earth to be but before you on my good steed, with a fair field and equal arms!—Was it for this, traitor, you led us across the ford?"

"Ay, for this!" said the stranger, proudly and exultingly. "Another week on that accursed island, and thy Louis would have been Sultan of Babylon!* Traitor am I none; but there were traitors enow in our court and camp, who would have sacrificed their country, and destroyed the plans of her virtuous sons, for the sake of their miserable broils. The die is now cast—the traitor is startled from his treason—the wavering hurried into virtue—and the coward terrified from flight. Away! remember the words that were spoken to thee by the Bedouin of the Nile. This is the place and the time!" and tearing off his pelisse and turban, which exhibited a complete suit of polished armour, he darted his spurs into his steed and plunged into the thickest of the fight.

* When Louis was told that it had been the intention of some of the chiefs to offer him the sultanhip of Babylon, the Lord de Joinville remarked that he would have done a very foolish thing to have accepted of it, seeing that they had murdered their former Lord. "Notwithstanding which, the King said that he would scarcely have refused it."—Hist. de St. Louis.

This was indeed the square indicated by the Bedouin; and Amauri was close by the gate of the house. His horse had been led off by the Saracens, who had fallen back on the appearance of the stranger, and, wounded and exhausted, he was in no condition to fight on foot against a multitude of mounted enemies. From the power besides—and he deemed it little less than miraculous—which the brother of Aza had exercised over his own fortunes and those of the war, he was little inclined to disregard his advice in an affair which he conceived to be so momentous; and, after a glance of regret at the battle, which still raged with unabated fury, he rushed into the house, determining either to learn his fate in an instant, or to return at once, and trust to time and St. James.

He passed through a suite of several rooms, superbly decorated with gilding and mirrors, and furnished with cushions of silk and velvet, without meeting a human being; and as he receded from the street the silence became so strange that he half imagined he had wandered into some enchanted palace. At length, however, he reached an inhabited room, where a veiled lady, with an ivory box under her arm, stood as if waiting to receive him.

“Christian,” said she, as he entered the room—and the voice made him start for it was that of Aza—“behold the token!” and she placed in his hands the ivory box, which was about a foot square and of considerable weight.

“Aza!” said the knight, “my gentle friend! draw aside your veil, that Amauri may see once more the beautiful face which was wont to bend over the couch of his sickness, like that of a guardian angel!” Aza hesitated for a moment; but at length complying, disclosed the same features of transcendent beauty which had affected so powerfully the imagination of the wounded knight.

There was a change, however, he knew not how nor where. The fairness of her complexion had not faded into the paleness of sorrow; and no fulness, graceful or otherwise, either in the outline or filling up of the features, had marked the progress of time at an age when the girl grows, almost sensibly to the eye, into womanhood. She had not ripened by one sunbeam the more into the season of her prime; neither was the morning bud of her beauty

touched by one shade or token of untimely decay. Her cheek was still dazzlingly fair ; her eyes were still filled with the rich, warm light which makes the eyes of others heavy and faint with their loveliness ; and her long, glittering hair, intensely black, had not even parted with one of the gems with which she was wont to adorn it so profusely that her head might have been likened to the dark skies of midnight when they are powdered with stars. Still she was changed. It might be that the slight curve of the lip was somewhat heightened, and that there was more of tension in its substance than before ; Amauri knew not, but he felt as if something had passed across the face which had modified its character without altering the features, and that Aza was now a thing to be admired, but to be beloved no more.

A painful thrill shot through the heart of the knight as he gazed. Aza did not shrink from his unconscious scrutiny ; but at last, a slight tinge of red rose into her cheek, and then faded away into so excessive a paleness as to convince Amauri, for the first time, that her usual complexion was not formed by the total absence of what is termed colour.

"Christian," said she, after musing for a little while, "thou hast not forgotten the time when Aza was wont to bend over thy feverish couch, even as a young mother watches the moaning slumbers of her first-born ? No, thou hast not ! Well, in these solitary hours, my ears did oftentimes drink in the murmurs of thy dreaming lips ; and I knew that thy thoughts were with thy beloved, wandering on the sunny hills and plains of thy native land, or kneeling, with that chosen one, beside some ruined fane of the God of thy fathers. And behold, Aza dreamed too ! and I said to my soul, Why did not I also grow in that land of peace and beauty—even like the sweet flower which awaits this young warrior in his quiet garden at home ? And methought there was nothing within me, in the formation of my being, to hinder me from flourishing beneath the gentler skies of thy climate ; and I even amused myself with imagining—although I knew it at the very time to be vainer than a dream—that, if still transplanted, in the spring of my years, I might grow, live, and die there in tranquillity and content.

"The dream of Aza is over, and she is now awake. The ceaseless flow of circumstances reached me even in my subterranean retreat, and the spirit of my clime awoke within me. A gulf yawns between me and the things and persons of my dream more tremendous than the flood which encircles the heavenly paradise ; and although at first my soul wandered shrieking along the coasts of the abyss, I have now ceased even to regret. Christian, think not harshly of Aza ; for thou canst not judge her. They have named us, it is true, by the same name in the scale of creation ; but in our natures, in the constitution of our beings, we are different. Preserve this box, as thy wouldst preserve thy honour. Deliver it untouched into the hands of the Lady de Varennes, and in the presence of some noble witnesses ; it contains documents, written by the hand of Aza, which will explain the disappearance of the knight, and exculpate her and thee. Now, farewell !"

There had been something in her manner, rather than in the matter, during a part of this speech, which chilled the heart of Amauri ; but at its conclusion, and when the touching word "Farewell" had fallen from lips that to him had never before breathed aught but the accents of pity and kindness, he was moved with sorrow. He sank on one knee, and would have raised her hand to his lips. "Not that one !" said she hastily, but in a voice that almost sounded like mockery ; and having kissed her left hand, he rose up. Still he did not at once retire. He knew he should never see Aza more ; and a thousand busy recollections tugged at his heart. Aza herself was moved ; but it seemed to be more with surprise than sorrow. A slight agitation appeared in her manner, and a slight tinge rose into her cheeks ; but recollecting herself at once, her beautiful lip curled with pride, and drawing herself up to her full height—

"Christian," said she, "begone—pass on thy way in peace—fare thee well !" and when Amauri still lingered, as if to reply, she turned suddenly, but noiselessly, round, and glided proudly away. He followed her with his eyes along a corridor which led into the room. At its extremity, the graceful and stately figure paused for

an instant, and Amauri waved his hand as a parting salute ; but she had disappeared without turning her head.

When the knight regained the street, the din of battle was over ; but in the many dead bodies that were strewed around, he read testimonials of the fierceness of the struggle. His own horse stood ready at the gate, and he was officiously assisted to mount by some servants ; but when in the act of placing his foot in the stirrup, he was instantaneously and dexterously stripped of his offensive arms, and two Saracens riding up, one on each side, he found that he was a prisoner. The manner in which the manœuvre was executed, and the coolness of the parties employed, convinced him, in the first place, that no personal injury was intended to himself ; and in the next, that the Christian army had been defeated.

His judgment proved to be correct. When they had cleared the town, numerous groups of Saracens were seen on all sides stripping their prisoners, or riding heavily over the plains, loaded with booty. In some places, where the walls of an old house, or the stem of a tree, afforded security that the victims should not be wholly surrounded, a last and desperate resistance was still making by several parties of Christian knights, who fought furiously for half an hour of life, but did not gain the prize.

On the banks of the river near Massoura the scene was still more appalling. A part of the army of the Crusaders had attempted to cross ; but, weakened by their wounds and the heat of the weather, both men and horses were swept away by the torrent ; and the whole surface of the water was covered with lances, ~~pikes~~, shields, and dead bodies floated down by the tide. Still the victory did not appear to have been wholly decisive ; for, on some information received by couriers spurring towards Babylon, Amauri's escort seized the bridle of his horse, and turning their backs to the river, hurried him away into the interior.

They rested that night at a village, and in the morning recommenced their journey towards Damietta ; and thus for many days was the unhappy pilgrim led, one moment even within the sights

and sounds of the war, and the next dragged away from a scene of such maddening interest. The reports in the meantime which were flying around him, contributed still more to harass his mind. One day it was said that the Christians were cut to pieces; and the next, that the Sultan of Babylon with his whole army was put to flight; but at length some information that could be relied upon appeared to have been received, and his guides set forth with confidence and alacrity for the banks of the Nile.

St. Louis, sick almost to death, and hopeless of escaping ultimate defeat, had been constrained to yield to circumstances, but intended to yield like a King. He opened a negotiation with the Saracens, in which he consented to surrender Damietta, and evacuate Egypt, on condition of their delivering up to him the realm of Jerusalem; and these terms, haughty as they must have seemed, were on the point of being acceded to by the enemy, when a circumstance occurred of a singularly trivial nature, which completely changed the face of affairs.

While the King was awaiting the return of his ambassador at Casel, where he lay in a woman's lap, scarcely expecting to survive the day, an apostate Frenchman of low rank, named Marcel, approached the French troops, and shouted out to the officers, who were eagerly and anxiously looking out for news of the negotiation—

“Ho! Sir Knights, the King commands you to surrender, in order to save your lives!”*

Thunderstruck at the command, the Crusaders, astonished and dispirited, gave up their arms to a man; and the Saracens, seeing the knights of the contracting party led away prisoners, broke off the treaty, and seized the King's person.

The very elements appeared to have entered into league on this occasion with the infidels; for a mighty tempest arose, which scattered and stranded the vessels in which the remainder of the army were attempting to force their way to Damietta: and the Saracens, taking advantage of the circumstance, made a general

* Joinville.

attack both by land and water, and darted such showers of bolts,* wrapped about with Greek fire, upon the shipping, that it seemed as if the stars were falling from the heavens.†

Stranded singly on the sand banks, or driven like wrecks upon the shore, the fleet of the Crusaders became an easy prize when the throats of the sick and wounded were immediately cut and their bodies thrown into the river; and those who seemed able to work, or to obtain ransom, were marched away prisoners.

It was in the midst of this scene that Amauri arrived on the banks of the Nile, and was hurried on board a vessel about to sail for Damietta. Although by turns choking with rage, and sick almost to fainting with horror, he yet felt himself constrained to gaze with fearful interest upon the massacres committed around him. A small vessel, in particular, which had just grounded close to the stern of the one in which he was embarked, drew his attention. A broad gangway was fixed by the Saracens between her deck and the beach, and the knights, soldiers, and crew, were dragged forth upon it one by one, and landed or butchered according to their condition.‡

He had gazed upon this scene till his brain whirled and his eyes became dim; when suddenly a figure appeared before him on the dreadful stage, which, for an instant, seemed to his confused mind to be a phantom in a dream. The Count de St. Paul, too ill even to kneel without being held up, was on his knees on the slippery plank, his hands clasped in prayer, and his neck bare to the knife of the assassin, who with one hand grasped his throat, and with the other pointed his dripping blade towards him in the act to strike. —

At this spectacle, Amauri uttered a cry so loud and wild, that even the actors in the horrid tragedy paused and looked up. The next instant he had sprung from the stern of his ship upon the plank, and was floundering in the bloody river with the executioner. The tumult which ensued was indescribable. The

* Arrows shot from cross-bows and springals.

† Joinville.

‡ Ibid.

Saracen guards of the knight, assisted by the crew they had hired, exerted themselves manfully, both with tongue and steel, for his deliverance from the inevitable destruction which seemed to await his rashness. They swore by the Prophet, that their own lives, and those of the whole party, would pay the forfeit, if but a hair of his head was injured; and at length, by dint of threats, promises, and blows, prevailed upon the mob of assassins to deliver him up alive. Amauri, however, clasping the father of Adelaide in his arms, swore with tenfold fervency, that no earthly power should separate them; and it was finally agreed that his security should be accepted for a large ransom, and the prisoner transmitted with him to Damietta.

It is sufficient for the purposes of this history to mention, that St. Louis, after undergoing innumerable hardships, dangers, and indignities, at length ransomed himself, and the miserable remains of his army, for four hundred thousand livres, and the town of Damietta. The last meeting of the court, previous to their embarkation on their return to Europe, was a sad and solemn scene. The King, while the tears started to his eyes, as he remembered the fate of his gallant brother, the Count d'Artois, went round the circle of his lords and ladies, offering to each of them—for all had lost some friend or kinsman—such condolence as was in his power. When he arrived at the beautiful Lady de Varennes, he paused in some perplexity; for she wore no widow's dress to warrant his consolation for the death of her husband; and yet the good King feared that to encourage the hopes she might still entertain, would only render the probable disappointment she would have to suffer still more agonizing.

At this moment, Sir Amauri stepped forward, and, kneeling before his prince, requested that he would bear witness to the delivery of the ivory box which he held in his hand, to the Lady de Varennes. The knight then recounted some particulars of the manner in which it had been entrusted to his care by a Saracen lady, who had been insulted by Sir Renault during the first residence of the army in Damietta. It contained, as he was informed, documents written by the lady herself, which would

explain satisfactorily the disappearance of the Lord de Varennes ; and it was to be opened before noble witnesses, by the spouse of the banneret herself.

The Lady de Varennes shook with emotion as, assisted by Amauri, she undid the fastenings of the box ; and even the sinewy hands of the knight himself trembled either at the contact they enjoyed, or at the fateful secret of which he awaited the development. The lid was at length opened, and Adelaide took hold of a towel in which the contents were wrapped ; which, however, resisted her efforts. Impatient of the delay, Amauri then, in a paroxysm of curiosity, shook the box violently,—and a human head rolled upon the floor ! The ghastly features were those of the Lord de Varennes ; and his widow, uttering a shriek of horror at the sight, fell senseless into the arms of the spectators.

Aza's gifts had not yet ceased ; for Amauri, after the embarkation, found in the cabin appropriated for his use a greater store of riches, in stuffs, gold, and jewels, than the penniless adventurer had ever contemplated even in dreams : and he was thus enabled, after the arrival of the fleet at Acre—the period of his service with the Count de St. Paul being expired—to receive into his service a number of knights and men-at-arms, who had been reduced to poverty during the crusade.

By the time the Crusaders had arrived at Damascus, the seclusion to which either the customs of the time, or her own inclinations, had condemned the virgin-widow, was almost at an end ; and Amauri had frequent opportunities of cultivating an intimacy which he eagerly desired should grow closer and closer every day to the end of his life. When at length the pilgrims had cut their palm branches,* and were on the voyage homewards to

* Pilgrims, on setting out on their journey, went with scrip and staff ; but when their vows were accomplished, they cut off branches of palm trees, which are a common produce of these countries, and brought them back as a proof of having fulfilled their vows. On their return home, they went to church to return God thanks for their safe arrival, and presented their palm branches to the priest, who placed them on the altar.

France, the two often sat up to a late hour, on a clear starry night, discoursing, on the forsaken deck, of their adventures.

"After all the horrors which I have witnessed," said Amauri on one of these occasions, "and which I myself have been accessory in producing, I am often forced to inquire whether it was really my duty, as a Christian, to travel beyond seas, for the purpose of carrying desolation and death into the abodes of the infidels. My perplexity, however, must be only an effect of the human weakness of my mind; for the holy vision by which I was prompted, and the miraculous sign by which its truth was attested—and—and—and—" Amauri paused in double perplexity, for a smile of most heretical brightness played on the lips of his hitherto orthodox Adelaide.

"You mean the vision of St. James," said she, "which you have often recounted. You no doubt saw the holy martyr with your mind's eye; and, seeing him, you did not deign to look upon *me*, who nevertheless was there at the time, and fled into the wood as you awoke!"

"Adelaide!"

"And as for the attesting sign—the scarf—"

"Adelaide!"

"Which I bound upon your sleeping arm, having just then received in private a command from the Queen to attend her—"

"Adelaide, Adelaide—it is enough!" cried Amauri, stealing his arm round her waist—"You then were the saint who led me from my country and my home, to fight, in a distant land, the battles—if not of the cross—at least of love and beauty! Lo! I am returned. Already the hills of our lovely France rise upon my view—and I claim the prize of my prowess!"

"Prowess!" exclaimed Adelaide, smiling through her blushes. "Oh, thou recreant Knight! hast thou not been beaten till thou wert more than half dead?—and is it thou who talkest of the prize?"

"Yes, sweet saint!" said Amauri, "even I!—for are we not told that the pilgrims who submit to wounds, or captivity, or death, in the Paynim land, shall be rewarded for their sufferings at last

with—with—paradise?" and he clasped her, unresisting, in his arms.

The Count de St. Paul was overjoyed to have an opportunity of testifying his gratitude to the brave and generous preserver of his life, by granting the suit which Amauri made to him, immediately on their arrival in France. The hand of the rich heiress was placed in that of her lover before the whole court; and the Count de Champagne cutting away the tails of his pennon, our Knight at length raised a banner, which long waved freely and proudly in the armies of France.





The Bondsman's Feast.

Alas, they had been friends in youth !

COLERIDGE.

ONCE on a time there flourished in the town of Troyes a citizen whose name was Arthault de Nogent. This person, of obscure and servile parentage, had begun the world without one of the advantages which are commonly supposed to predicate a successful career. A link in a long line of bourgeois, that had

grown in the feudal domain of the Count de Champagne, he appeared to be destined for nothing else than to transmit unbroken the chain of bondage to another generation. By some strange concurrence of circumstances, however, assisted by great industry, strict honesty, and a natural pride, of that kind which raises its head haughtily above every one but a superior in power or fortune, Arthault gradually emerged from obscurity, and at least gilded the hereditary fetters which he could not throw off.

His first patron was Sir Launcelot Sansavoir, a knight of ancient family. When boys, they had played together on the terms of political equality dictated by Nature ; and even in other respects they seemed to be pretty nearly on a level ; for if the balance of strength and courage was on the side of Launcelot, that of skill and address on the part of his low-born companion held firm the equipoise. As they grew up, however, and the laws of Nature were gradually superseded by those of society, Arthault was reminded, by many a bitter token, of the artificial distinctions which hedged round his heretofore playfellow from the degrading familiarity of a bourgeois. But the hard lesson was never taught directly by the freeman to the serf. Launcelot, although of a fierce and rough temper, was generous withal. He loved his humble companion, with the love which simple contact inspires in the open and guileless heart of a boy ; and when the days of boyhood were over, he still continued to evidence, by the kindnesses which then acquired the name of patronage, that his early sentiments were unaffected by the accidental distinctions of the world. He assisted his protégé both with influence and money, countenanced his first efforts to assume a rank in society from which he might have appeared to be excluded by his birth, and fairly set him afloat on that tide of fortune which was to carry him to prosperity and power.

As he returned, from time to time, to his native town, in the pauses of the career of arms to which he had devoted himself, he saw with new surprise, and for a season with new satisfaction, the changes which were taking place in the waxing fortunes of his dependent. The corresponding changes, however, in the mind and

manner of the bourgeois were not so pleasing, and to one acquainted with the world, would not have been so surprising. Arthault, the farther he advanced from the point at which he had set out, wished the more ardently to forget it. Every word that reminded him of what he had been went like a dagger to his breast ; and the unconscious remarks of Launcelot on the subject rankled and festered in his heart. The wincing of wounded vanity was little understood by the knight, who only thrust the deeper as the other shrunk back ; till at length Arthault looked forward to the return of his former patron from the wars both with terror and disgust.

By and by, he had attained a station of importance sufficient to encourage him to return the unintentional insults of Sir Launcelot by at least reproach ; and the fiery knight, in retaliation, seized several opportunities, both public and private, to mortify the pride of the base-born ingrate. By this time Arthault felt himself strong enough to fling back injury for injury ; and thus a war of words, rather than actions, commenced, which ended in the deadliest hate on both sides.

This consummation, however, was in part brought about by circumstances foreign to the original cause of quarrel. Sir Launcelot's temper had been soured by reverses in fortune, almost as great as the advances made by the bourgeois, and a kind of jealousy was awakened in his naturally frank and generous mind, by occurrences of a precisely opposite nature to those which had wounded the feverish jealousy of Arthault. A reproach for supposed unkindness thus sounded to the one like a cowardly insult levelled at his falling fortunes ; and a burst of anger at the imaginary wrong, to the other, like an intentional affront ~~to the~~ ^{to the} merit which had raised him from the dust.

Sir Launcelot was at length completely ruined in the wars of his prince ; his estate was pawned piecemeal ; and the château of his ancestors, the only fragment of his patrimony now his own, fell into ruins. Arthault, on the other hand, advanced step by step in wealth and honour, arrived at length at a high financial post, *under that very prince who had discarded or forgotten the bankrupt knight, and, without the actual title of minister, became, in*

every respect, the confidential agent of the Count Palatine of Champagne.*

But all this, it may be supposed, was not the work of less than many years. The families of the knight and the bourgeois were, for a considerable time, intermingled in friendly intimacy; and the rupture, gradual as it was, was yet too sudden to take place without being attended by grief and tears.

Arthault's only child was a son, who owed nothing to his father but the prospect of a fair inheritance, for he was little like him in form, and not at all in mind; he was a fine, manly, generous, and high-spirited youth, such as would have been thought too early born, had his appearance been made before the hereditary servility of his family was forgotten. The knight, too, had an only child, a daughter; who, in personal appearance and moral qualities, contrasted in as a remarkable a manner with her father. She was little almost to a fault, in the standard of beauty, if there be such a thing; her form was moulded with a delicacy, which gave the idea of one of those aerial shapes that dance in the beam of poesy; and there was that gentle and refined playfulness of expression in her fair countenance, which artists have loved to picture in the nymphs of some sylvan goddess, whose rudest employment is to chase one another on the green bank, or sport in the transparent wave.

Guillaume loved the beautiful bourgeoisie before he knew that such love was a condescension; and Amable, when, on being

* Joinville. The Counts, under the first and second race, were both governors of provinces and judges; and those retained about the royal person, for the decision of cases of importance, which required the judgment of the King, were called, by way of eminence, Counts Palatine, or Counts of the Palace. The increasing extent of the territory of France, which at one time included part of Germany, Italy, and other countries, led necessarily to an increase in the number of these supreme judges, and Counts Palatine were established in various provinces of the kingdom. After the fatal battle of Fontenay, and the invasion of the Normans (described in the *Adventures of Eriland*), these provincial Counts, in the confusion of the time, arrogated to themselves, as of right, the governments hitherto held by them as officers removable at the royal pleasure, and transmitted their titles and authority to their descendants, as hereditary property.

desired by her father to refuse her heart to Guillaume, she thought of inquiring whether she possessed such a thing at all, started with surprise to find that she had given it away to the knight's son long ago. But where was the use of repining? Guillaume was young, and handsome, and generous, and brave; and what harm could befall her heart in such keeping? Amable turned away from her father with a light laugh and a light step, and stealing skipingly round the garden wall—for already the paternal prohibitions had gone forth—bounded towards a grove of wild shrubs at the farther end.

The trees were bathed in sunlight; the air was filled with the song of birds; the face of heaven was undimmed by a single spot of shade; and the earth was green, and sparkling, and beautiful beneath. Such was the scene around her; but in Amable's mind a warmer and brighter sun shed its light upon her maiden dreams, and the voice of the sweet, rich singer Hope drowned the melody of the woods. "Away!" she thought; "it cannot be that this strange, unkindly mood can endure; my father loves his friend in spite of all, and the noble and generous knight could not hate if he would. They shall not be a week apart when they will both regret what has passed; and when they meet again, I will laugh them into a confession that they have done so. Then the two friends will embrace; and then Guillaume and I will sing, and dance, and read together again—and then—and then—and then——" It seemed as if her thoughts had run her out of breath; for at this point of the reverie she paused, and hung back for a moment, while a sudden blush rose to her very eyes. Soon, however, she recovered; she threw back her head gaily, and ~~yet~~ proudly; legends of happy love crowded upon her memory, and minstrel songs echoed in her ear; she bounded lightly into the wood, and as some one, darting from behind a tree, caught her while she passed, Amable, with the stifled scream of alarm which maidens are wont to give when they wish it unheard by all save one, found herself in the arms of Guillaume.

The predictions of her heart were not verified; for the breach between the heretofore friends became wider every day. Her

meetings with Guillaume were more unfrequent, and no longer in the daytime, but by the mystic light of the moon. Then came the fall of her father's house, more precipitous as the descent went on, till it stopped amidst darkness and ruins. The family château sunk into decay; and rising near it, in an inverse ratio, a princely mansion appeared, the shadow of whose towers fell cold and stern upon the blackened walls where the father and daughter disputed an abiding place with the owls.

This new edifice was the Château de Nogent, built by Arthault, who was already styled the Lord de Nogent.* He was now one of the wealthiest citizens of Troyes, and so completely in the confidence of the Count, that to gain his favour was esteemed an indispensable preliminary in business of any kind to be transacted at the court. This arrangement did not injure much the interests of justice and true policy, for Arthault wanted neither in benevolence nor judgment; and it is even to be supposed, from his general character, that, at this epoch of his prosperity, he would have gladly consented to a reconciliation with the now impoverished patron of his earlier years. Sir Launcelot's hatred, however, became more bitter and uncompromising as the decline of his fortunes went on; and so fearless were his aggressions, so far as speech could go, that even in the lowest depth of poverty, he was an enemy to be dreaded rather than despised by the morbid sensibility of Arthault.

There were some instances, it may be remarked, in which those who knew the secret of his fortunes, and thus the grand weakness in the character of the bourgeois lord, contrived to warp his opinion to the side of cruelty and injustice. One or two of the errors into which Count Henri had in consequence been betrayed were accidentally exposed; and that prince, surnamed Le Large,† or the Liberal, turned for a moment an eye of suspicion on his counsellor. The lucky stars of Arthault, however, prevailed, and

* Joinville.

† Large is from *largesse*, which expresses liberality. The Latin writers of the middle ages used the word *largus* in the same sense.—Du Cange.

the Count found his single failing of jealous pride so amply redeemed by many good and useful qualities, that he continued him in his favour as before. To such a height, indeed, did he at length arrive in the estimation of his prince, that on the completion of the Château de Nogent, Henri paid him a visit in person, and partook of the hospitality of his house for a day and a night, not in the manner of a noble thus seizing on the feudal tax due to him by his serf, but with all the form and courtesy of a friend visiting his equal.

This was a proud and a happy day for Arthault. His head was in the clouds—he scarcely seemed to touch the earth with his feet; but yet, with the strong control which worldly men are wont to exercise over their feelings, he schooled his aspect into the bland and lowly expression of grateful humility. When, in the early part of the morning, the echoes of Nogent were awakened by a flourish of trumpets, which proclaimed the approach of the Count, instead of waiting to receive him in the arcade under the belfry, according to the common usage of lords at that period,* he walked bareheaded to the gate of the outer court, and kneeling, held the prince's stirrup as he dismounted.

The breakfast was served in cups and porringers of silver, set on a magnificent gold tray, and consisted chiefly of milk made thick with honey, peeled barley, cherries dried in the sun, and preserved barberries. The bread was of the *mias* cakes composed of rye-flour, cream, orange-water, and new-laid eggs;† and the whole was distributed among the guests by Guillaume; the host himself having been compelled to take his seat at the table by the Count.

The morning was spent in viewing the improvements of the place, and riding about the neighbourhood; and at ten o'clock the company partook of a dinner served in the same style of tasteful magnificence. The viands included, among other things,

* Gerard de Roussillon, MS. cited in Tristan le Voyageur.

† The paste formed of these materials was spread upon broad cabbage leaves, which came out of the oven covered with a slight golden crust, composing the *mias* cakes.—Tristan le Voyageur.

a lamb roasted whole, the head of a wild boar covered with flowers, fried trouts, and poached eggs, which were eaten with boiled radishes, and peas in their shells.*

A profusion of the precious metals graced the table, more especially in drinking cups; those of horn, which were formerly in general use, having about this period gone out of vogue. The luxury of forks, it is true, had not yet been invented; but when it is remembered that the hands were washed publicly, before and after meals, not as a fashionable form, but in absolute earnest, it will not be feared that any indelicacy in the feasters contrasted with the state and splendour of the feast.†

The wines filled by Guillaume, who waited particularly on the Count, besides the fashionable vin d'Aî of the district,‡ included the vin de Beaume of Burgundy, the vin d'Orleans, so much prized by Louis le Jeune, and the powerful vin de Rebrechien (another Orleans wine), which used formerly to be carried to the field by Henry I. to animate his courage.§

After dinner the guests partook of the amusement of the chase, which afforded Arthault an opportunity of exhibiting, in all its extent, his newly acquired estates—and which, indeed, comprehended a great part of the family property of Sansavoir; although the Count did not observe, and therefore no one else was so ill-bred as to do so, an old blackened building mouldering near the garden wall, which Sir Launcelot had still preserved, and where he continued to reside, in a kind of dogged defiance of his enemy.

* Tristan le Voyageur. Boiled radishes, it may be important to know, are an excellent substitute for asparagus!

† Forks did not come into use till the time of Charles V., in the latter half of the fourteenth century. In France, these instruments, both in silver and tinned iron, are made so as to bear some resemblance to the fingers, of which they are the substitutes, and they are used exclusively in the business of conveying food to the mouth; while the knives, being narrow and sharp-pointed, can answer no purpose but that of carving.

‡ The vin d'Aî, in Champagne, according to Patin, was called "Vinum Dei," by Dominicus Bandius. It was the common drink of kings and princes.—Paumier, *Traité du Vin*.

§ Mabillon, *Annales Benedictines*.

The festivities of the day were closed by a splendid supper, attended by music and minstrel songs; and when the sleeping-cup had passed round, the Count Henri retired to the chamber prepared for him, which he found to be not at all inferior to his own in luxury and magnificence. Vessels of gold, filled with rose-water, were placed on his dressing-table; the curtains of the ample bed were ornamented with partridge plumes, supposed to ensure to the sleeper a long and peaceful life;* and, in short, nothing was wanting that might have been deemed pleasing either to the taste or superstition of the age.

In spite of all, the Count Henri could not sleep. He listened to the dying noises in the house, and at last to the tread of Guillaume, who passed through the corridors, in the manner of a squire, to ascertain that everything was secure for the night;† and then, invoking the protection of Our Lady, turned himself on his side and closed his eyes. It was in vain; he felt restless and feverish; and at length starting up, he opened the window and looked out into the night.

It was a night of midsummer—clear, still, and balmy. His window opened upon a terrace which sloped down into the garden, and commanded an extensive view of rich shrubbery and shady walks. The Count, after gazing for a while, imagined that a stroll in so delightful a place would soothe his restlessness, and that the perfume of the innumerable flowers, falling sweet and heavy upon his senses, might dispose him for sleep. Wrapping a loose gown about him, therefore, he stepped out upon the terrace, and sauntered slowly into the garden.

Having admired for some time the order and neatness which prevailed around, and which were rendered distinctly visible by the clear moonlight, he dived into a grove, stretching from near the house to the end of the garden, intending to cross into another walk beyond. When he had gained the middle of this retreat, where the branches were shadiest, he was startled by a sound among the leaves, different from the voice of the gentle night-

* Thiers, *Traité des Superst.*

† St. Palaye.

wind ; and by and by something appeared like a moving shadow. Unlike a shadow, however, it bent the branches as it went along ; and when at length it passed between Count Henri and the faint moonbeams, which strayed into the other side of the wood, he saw that it resembled the figure of a tall man covered with a cloak, and gliding swift and silent through the trees.

Count Henri's heart leaped within him at the appearance of so unexpected an object in the dark and midnight grove ; but being a man of courage, he presently recovered his presence of mind.

"By the Holy Mary!" said he, crossing himself, "be thou here for good or evil, I will see what thou art, and what is thy purpose," and he followed swiftly but silently the muffled figure. In a few minutes it had cleared the wood ; and Henri, waiting in the shadow of the trees, saw it advance close to the garden wall. The next moment it disappeared, and so suddenly that the spectator was in some doubt as to whether it had leaped the barrier, or oozed, in ghost fashion, through the solid masonry.

"Beshrew my heart," said he, "but thou art a tall fellow and a stout ! Yet will I after, if the saints please, though I break my neck in the adventure !" and scrambling over the wall with good courage, but somewhat less agility than had been exhibited by the stranger, he speedily found himself in another garden, or in a place liable to some suspicion of having once been so, which contrasted strangely with the one he had just quitted.

The walks were choked up, weeds contested the pre-eminence with flowers, and flowers emulated the wildness and rankness of weeds, fruit trees, long past the age of bearing, mouldering and moss-grown, looked like monuments of the past ; and everywhere Nature was seen reclaiming to her rude domain that which once had been ravished from it by art. It was a place, indeed, which seemed to be singularly well fitted for the haunt of nightly spirits ; and as the Count discovered that the phantom-figure had totally vanished, a somewhat uncomfortable sensation crept over his heart.

He listened, but all was still. Had the slightest rustling among the leaves met his ear, he would have shouted out, to challenge

the step of this mysterious wanderer of the moonlight ; but, in the absence of every sound indicating human motion, he scarcely liked to send his voice through the wilderness. At length a small solitary light appeared gleaming through the trees ; and, determined to finish, like a gallant knight, the adventure he had commenced, the Count Henri made towards it swiftly but cautiously.

The light proceeded from a window in a house so far gone in decay that, without this testimony, he would have hesitated to believe it still inhabited. As he approached, an owl, keeping sentry in the ruined belfry, startled him with his hoarse "too-whoo!" and, as if it had been really the *huée* of the *guaité*, or sentinel, which each vassal who heard it was obliged to repeat, the alarm was echoed by at least a dozen other discordant voices, and at the moment a large bat, swooping down, circled round the visitor's head so closely that the wings agitated his hair, and thus seemed to marshal him the way to the house of desolation. The mansion had evidently been a chateau of considerable strength ; and its broken pallisades, choked ditches, and ruined barbicans still looked grim and threatening in their decay. Immense beams of timber swung by the walls, supported by iron cables half eaten through with rust ; the drawbridge, which appeared to have never been raised since the house was spoiled of all that was worth defending, was firmly bedded in the ground ; and the doorways, which had perhaps originally been sunk a little below the surface, from the collection of rubbish, or the spontaneous growth of the seldom-trodden earth, were now half buried.

The Count drew near, with a mixture of pity and curiosity ; and, crossing the drawbridge, which resembled a bank of earth, being covered with vegetation growing out of the decomposed timber, reached the window which contained the light, and looked in.

A young woman was sitting alone in the black and ruinous chamber. Struck with surprise and admiration by her extreme beauty, and a certain incongruity with the scene exhibited in her manner and expression, Count Henri stood for some moments

motionless, and almost breathless, at the window. Had he seen such a figure skipping along the walks of Arthault's garden, or lying asleep on a moonlight bank, he would have been in no perplexity on the subject. He would at once have rubbed his eyes, and blessed himself at the apparition of an actual damsel of faëry, or have imagined that his fancy, disturbed by the aromatic perfume, and the agency of the brain-controlling moon, had



conjured up before him a garden spirit—a personification of the beauty, elegance, freshness, and fragrance of the flowers. But here! surrounded by black and mouldering walls, and the companion of bats and owls! He remembered to have heard the Angel of Death described in song, as a beautiful and benignant spirit; but who was she, this lonely dweller among tombs and ruins—this lady of the past?

On minute examination, however, the playfulness of youth,

which sat enthroned on her fair brow, with a kind of equivocal dignity, that half awed and half authorized familiarity, seemed to belong more to the original mould of the features than to the actual condition of the mind; and Henri imagined that he detected a shade even of sadness hovering over her bright cheek, her sparkling blue eyes and rich and ruby lip, which proved her only too plainly to be one of earth's daughters. A powerful interest was excited by the discovery; and, as it usually happens in such circumstances with good minds, his surprise and admiration were chastened by the affectionate pity which we term sympathy.

The picture before him was rendered still more singular by the occupation of the young female; for, at this midnight hour, she seemed in the act of arranging her hair, as if about to visit, or receive visitors. A part of her very long tresses hung in wildly beautiful disorder about her face; while on the other side they were curled up in ringlets which would have compelled the most devout admirer of the simple, to admit that art might embellish nature. As the work went on, however, it appeared that art had very little to do in the matter. A bend of the hand—a twirl of the magic finger, and up ran the wreath of hair in its appointed form; nor did the cheek seem to be more indebted to the cosmetics of the toilet, for the fragment of a mirror in which she contemplated her face was the only furniture of the table.*

When she had finished her toilet, she started, as if on hearing some sound, and hastily drew a large cap over her head, so as to conceal the hair, and enveloped her figure in an old shawl. Presently a man entered the apartment; and a pang of shame passed across the heart of Count Henri, as he recognized—although this was not without some difficulty—in the hard and war-worn features before him a tarnished resemblance to one of the oldest and most faithful servants of his house, the Knight of Sansavoir.

Sir Launcelot wore his hauberk, which knights seldom laid aside

* Rouge, and other assistants, or rather destroyers, of the complexion, were at this time in common use. In a piece entitled "*Le Mercier*," the merchant says—

"J'ai queton dont elles se rougisent,
J'ai blanchet dont elles se font blanches."

except when retiring to bed ; and over all was a coat of faded sendal,* on which his embroidered arms were almost entirely defaced by time and frequent darning. A kind of morose dignity lowered on his furrowed brow, and his sharp and anxious glance seemed to be looking out as much for cause of offence as for the approach of the troubles and vexations of the world. His shaggy head, which had once been coal-black, was completely silvered over, but so thinly, as it seemed, that the original colour was visible beneath. Although he had reached an age when the figure may gracefully bend under the load of years, his was still as erect and stiff as a lance ; which, taken conjointly with this expression, conveyed the idea of force and constraint, as if he compelled himself to bear up against the ills and insults which poverty is heir to, and struggle desperately even with Time himself.

"My child," said the stout old knight, and his grim features relaxed as he addressed his daughter. "Why, Amable, are you up so late?"

"It is so fine a night!" replied Amable ; "and besides, dear father, I am anxious to know the result of the meeting of our creditors. You have not spoken one word since your return from Troyes."

"I wished, my child, that you should at least sleep on the last night you are to spend in the ancient abode of your fathers. You are so changed, Amable ! You who were wont to return with a smile the buffets of the world, and laugh so gleesomely at the strange, tattered garb of Poverty, when the old beggar came knocking with his iron staff at my very heart,—why now, even now, you start, and turn pale !"

"It was only the moonlight, my father, passing across my face," said Amable, throwing herself into his arms. "Is not this, then, the worst? Can there be a worse still? Come, I will meet it ! My eyes, indeed, may be wet when I bid adieu to these old

* This is what we call taffety. When Joinville reproached Saint Louis with the splendour of his dress, he remarked, that he would do well to sell his useless finery for the benefit of the poor, and clothe himself in good sendal, lined and strengthened with his arms, like his father before him.

towers, beautiful and beloved even in their ruin ; but through my tears you shall see sparkle the spirit of my ancestors. Let it be this night, aye, this minute, and I am ready. Go on, my father, for I will follow you ; and even should the sky be red around us with the glare of burning, your Amable shall not once turn her head to inquire shudderingly what had become of all that was once so dear to her !” The old man groaned aloud.

“There is worse still,” said he ; “and by the blessed Virgin ! I know not how to speak it.”

“Speak it, and speak plainly,” said Amable hastily. “Tell me all—all—but——” and she gazed with a look of terrified suspicion into her father’s face, and then, stealing her hands round his hauberk till they met clasped behind—“Tell me anything but that !” she added. “Let them burn the *château* about our heads if they will, so that we perish *together* !” Her father trembled in her arms ; and it was some moments before he recovered sufficiently from the agitation to trust his voice with speech.

“Amable,” said he at length, “there must be no more of this. I thought we had both been schooled too well for the exhibition of such weakness. The case is this. My creditors, influenced by the traitorous fiend—the skulking, creeping, truckling, dastardly——”

“Oh, my father !”

“In a word—for I will be calm—by Arthault the Serf, have sued at the court of Rome for my excommunication as a bankrupt knight. To-morrow I shall be hunted like a beast of prey from the ruins of my home ; and if I should die the next moment, my body will be left to rot unburied.* Now, mark me, girl, there is no alternative ; I must forth to the Italian wars, and *you*——”

“I will be your page !” cried Amable suddenly. The old man was surprised into a grim but tearful smile.

“God help thee, poor maid !” said he ; “your world is still

* The strange diligence of creditors mentioned here continued to be in use for a considerable time after the date of this story.

the world of romance and song ! Amable, for my own subsistence I must fight, even with these war-worn arms ; for yours—I must beg.”

“How mean you, in the name of the Virgin?”

“Beg, I say, beg ! It is but once—the first and the last time. I have served my prince at the expense of my family. I have lost my all, in adventures of which he should have borne the cost ; and, if I alone had been concerned—shut out even as I am from that sun which should have warmed and enlightened my age, by a crowd of slaves and sycophants, with the reptile Lord of Nogent at their head—God knows, no murmur would have passed my lips, and no memento would have come from the last Sansavoir to call a blush into Count Henri’s face. You, my child, however, leave me no alternative. You cannot trudge with me to the wars, where I must go, friendless and a stranger, even like a wandering Scot ;* and you cannot remain at home without a protector. There is no help for it. I must sue for that grace which the customs of our country sanction in such circumstances. I must beg of my liege lord to provide an asylum for you, which I am unable to give—to bestow on you—aye, girl, you droop and turn pale—but that, too, must be borne !—to bestow on you a dowry, and provide you a husband.” Amable made no reply. She had drooped her head upon her father’s shoulder, and seemed to have been deprived of all sensation.

“Look up, my child !” said the old man, alarmed ; “look up, beloved of my heart ! I am too rough and sudden ; I will be more gentle, indeed I will. But yet, the shock must have come some time, and it is not worse to bear now than again. Weep, Amable ; weep, if you love your father ! it will ease your heart.

* Scotland, which was called the Ultima Thule, is mentioned by the Lord de Joinville as a “distant and unknown country.” The Scots, from the earliest times, “delighted so much in travelling to different countries, that there was scarcely a kingdom wherein great numbers of them were not to be found.”—Du Cange. This peculiarity in the nation is noticed by Walfridus Strabo, in the Life of St. Gal ; and the hospitals founded in France for these wandering strangers are noticed in the Capitulaires of Charles le Chauve.

There weep long and bitterly. I would myself accompany you, but my eyes are so hard now!—iron—iron!” and the old warrior covered his face with his hand.

“Enough!” he resumed with a start; “let us now bear the fortune which Heaven sends, with a calm brow. I pity you, my child, and not the less that I am myself the cause of half your grief. Had I done my duty as a father and a knight, you could never have formed that unhappy and degrading intimacy—”

“Degrading!” exclaimed Amable, almost fiercely, while a bright flush rose into her face.

“Nay, I am wrong,” said the father; “yes, I am wrong. Poor Guillaume, his heart at least is noble, and it is no fault of his that the blood of a slave runs in his veins. I have cursed the union, Amable, which I once looked forward to with joy; I have cursed it with the bitterest and most solemn curses of my heart; I have vowed that, while I live, you shall never be the wife of a bondsman; and if, when I am dead, you disobey me, it will be like trampling on your father’s grave! Notwithstanding, I will do no injustice to Guillaume. What! was it not from me that he learnt first to use his arms! Did I not teach him the cut and the thrust, the attack and defence, the rally and retreat? Did I not enter the mimic lists with him myself; and beshrew my heart, if he struck not at last so as to make his master stagger! Poor Guillaume! I loved him as if he were my own son!”

“Dear father,” said Amable, throwing her arms round his neck, “Guillaume returned your love in all strength and faithfulness!”

“No more of this—no more of this!” cried the old man, roughly and suddenly; “to bed, girl, and sleep if you can; but pray before you sleep, and promise your heavenly protector to deserve his care. Away! we will talk further in the morning. Not a word, not a tear! Good night.” Amable pressed her father’s hand to her throbbing heart, and then raising it to her pale cold lips, lighted a taper and glided out of the room.

Count Henri debated with himself for a moment whether he should not enter the house, and beg forgiveness of his brave old vassal for the neglect with which his services had been treated;

but suddenly a door opened beside him, and he had scarcely time to retreat into the shadow of the wall, when Amable stepped cautiously and noiselessly over the threshold. She paused for a moment, as if to listen, and then darted boundingly across the drawbridge, and was lost in the foliage beyond.

"Another phantom of the moonlight!" thought the startled spectator. "By the mass! if I do not trace this one to its haunt, I am no true knight;" and he sprang as lightly and as swiftly after her as the weight of sixty years would permit.

By and by she appeared in a clear space at some distance skimming through the moonlight, as if scarcely touching the earth at all; and was then lost in a grove near the wall of Arthault's garden. The Count, abandoning open pursuit, stole up to the part of the wall next him, through a double line of trees, and, keeping cautiously within the shadow, soon reached the place where the lady disappeared. It had once been a thickly-peopled orchard, and was even now almost impervious to the moon. Henri, stepping carefully among the broken, mouldering branches that cumbered the ground, had reached the middle of the plantation, without discovering any tokens of the skimmer of the night, and was now ready to fancy that he had been thus led astray, not by Amable herself, but by some woodland spirit that had assumed her shape. In another moment, however, he heard the same touching voice which had charmed his ear at the window, and it was mingled with some deeper and fuller tones, which he recognised as those of Guillaume de Nogent.

Henri had thus discovered both the objects of his pursuit at the same time; for, on advancing a little further, he saw the same tall, cloaked figure which he had followed through the garden. The lovers were sitting on the stump of a tree—too narrow to have held both, had they sat ceremoniously—and in the usual position of lovers, when they meet in a grove by moonlight, which is to say, with an arm round the slenderer waist, and a pale fair brow leaning against the taller shoulder. Amable was weeping, but not bitterly, as she had wept in her father's arms; and Guillaume

seemed to have forgotten, in the sweetness of the sorrow, that he had cause of sorrow at all.

"And now that you have heard all," said Amable at last, "nothing remains for us but to part."

"Aye, and to meet again," replied her lover; "and then to part no more! Count Henri is liberal and noble-minded; I will throw myself at his feet to-morrow, after your father's petition has been made, tell him our story from the beginning, and implore him to let his choice of a husband fall upon me."

"Alas!" said Amable, "there might be some hope in that, however slight; but there are other barriers too mighty even for hope to penetrate. You know my father's deep-rooted dislike——"

"Not to me, Amable, not to me. When I was a boy, I can remember I seemed to be as much his child as you yourself; and still, I know, the glorious old man loves me even as a son. Oh, would that his pride were not so strong! How many cares and distresses you might have been spared, in spite of my father's enmity! But, indeed, the wish is by no means unselfish; for, believe me, love, the thought of your sufferings has been drinking the very life-blood of my heart for years."

"Dear Guillaume! But, indeed, my father's pride is unconquerable; for now it is fortified by an oath."

"An oath! to refuse the assistance of a son-in-law?"

"No, to refuse receiving as a son-in-law one who is—who is not—who——"

"I understand you!" said Guillaume; and the blush that rose into his face was distinctly visible in the moonlight. "I am a bondsman!" and he started up, and strode away a few paces with a hasty and unsteady step.

"These arms are as strong," resumed he, turning fiercely round, "as those of a noble; my courage is as high; I am as well acquainted with all the usages and exercises of arms; yet I never must, never can wear the knightly hauberk! O that I were permitted to avenge the wrongs of my class, and assert the dignity of human nature! My sword would find a way through the meshes

of the mailed armour, and I would teach its wearer in what true knighthood consists !”

“Guillaume,” said his mistress, trembling at the vehemence of his voice and gestures ; “remember, dear Guillaume, that you are the same to Amable as if you were a knight-banneret !”

“Spirit of chivalry !” cried the lover, in a paroxysm of passion, “I defy thee ! there is my gage !” and he flung his glove violently into the trees. A sound was heard on the instant, like the heavy tread of a man ; and Amable, stifling a scream, threw herself into Guillaume’s arms.

“I take up the gage !” said a voice the next moment, which appeared to proceed from the top of the wall ; and a dead silence ensued, interrupted only by the beating of the lovers’ hearts, who imagined for the time, in the superstitious spirit of the age, that some phantom knight, perhaps Arthur himself, or one of his twelve companions, had replied to the defiance. Soon, however, Guillaume started, and breaking from his mistress, rushed to the spot where he had thrown his glove. It was gone.

“Fly,” said he, “Amable ; run, as if for your life, and show me instantly the light in your window to tell me that you are safe. We shall meet to-morrow—away, good night !” He gazed anxiously after her flying figure ; and when at length the light appeared in her window, he turned round and searched minutely every corner of the orchard for his mysterious enemy. He then leaped the wall, and inspected in the same manner the plantations in his father’s garden. All was silence and solitude. When he had ascended the terrace, he crept noiselessly past the window of the distinguished guest, for fear of disturbing his slumbers, and at length betook himself, in perplexity and sorrow, to his own uneasy bed.

The following day being Whitsunday, Count Henri set forth, with Arthault, Guillaume, and a great retinue, to hear mass in the church of St. Stephen, which he had founded at Troyes.* This was a still prouder day for the bourgeois than the last. During

* Camusat, *Antiquities of Troyes*.

the feast, there had been one drawback to his happiness; and that was the consideration that the world was not by to witness it. Now, however, he was about to enter his native town as it were in triumph, side by side with a sovereign prince, who would by that time be publicly known to have eaten, and drunk, and slept in his house, as a friend visits his friend.

"Arthault," said the Count, as they rode together into the town, discoursing of state affairs, "I have a subject of some moment to consult you upon. There is a certain matter to be transacted forthwith with a neighbouring prince, and I would ask your opinion as to the person who should be employed in the affair. He must be of mature age—about your own years, for instance; he must be a valiant knight, such as would support the dignity of his master against the companions of the Round Table themselves; and as it would be well, more especially on this blessed day, and when I am just about to enter the house of my heavenly protector, the most holy martyr St. Stephen, to combine charity with the appointment, he must be poor—miserably poor, if possible—the poorer the better. Know you such an one?"

"Sir," said Arthault, "I do. There is the Sire de Longueval, a man of honour and courage—an old man too, and passing poor withal."

"That is the noble person," remarked the Count, "on whose daughter, if I mistake not, you have cast your eyes for a wife for your son. If the marriage takes place, your family and his will be as one, and, therefore, passing rich, my friend. Set him aside."

"Well, Sir, there is Sir Gui de Marmont, who has lately sold his estate——"

"That he may buy another. How is this, Sir? Have we no man in our dominions who is at once brave, proud, and poor?" The Count spoke in a tone of displeasure, and spurred on.

Arthault for an instant was cast down. The description resembled in a most striking manner Sir Launcelot Sansavoir, and a panic struck the heart of the bourgeois, occasioned by his consciousness of the injustice he committed in omitting to name the ruined knight. Circumstances, however, had very lately occurred

to add tenfold bitterness to his enmity ; and, as Sir Launcelot had informed his daughter, the harsh step now adopted by the creditors was mainly owing to the evil influence of Arthault. Even the present displeasure of the prince was set down to the account of hatred ; and, with a constantly recurring pang, he found that his heretofore friend was in some way or other an object of dread even in the gulf of ruin.

When the cortège had entered the town, however, the spirits of the serf revived. The crowd gathered ; the buzz ran round and round, till increasing in volume, it rose into the shout of welcome. The homage of the people seemed to distinguish alike master and servant. Henri was the great and the liberal ; and Arthault, as the minister of his greatness and liberality, was scarcely farther separated from him in imagination than a member is from the body. Hats were waved, and knees bent as they passed ; and the voice that cried "God bless our good Count Henri !" never failed to add, "Honour to Arthault !"

They at length reached the steps of the great door of St. Stephen's Church ; and the multitude, ceasing their shouts in respect to the sanctity of the place, gathered still and silent around. The noble party dismounted, and began to ascend the stairs ; Count Henri walking first, and Arthault following closely behind. When the Count had gained the landing-place, a slight stir was observed among the people gathered round the door ; and presently a knight, leading a young female by the hand, detached himself from the crowd, and approached the sovereign.

It was Sir Launcelot Sansavoir, arrayed in his tarnished coat of arms, and no less faded were seen the roses in the cheeks of his lovely daughter, as pale, trembling, and abashed, she tottered by his side.

"How now, musart?"* said the Count. "It is long since thou hast honoured our poor court with thy presence ; where hast thou been?"

"I have been in the shade," replied the knight.

* Idler, one who amuses himself with doing nothing.

"And whither wouldst thou now, in the name of God?" Sir Launcelot knelt before his prince.

"Sir Count," said he, "I am for the Italian wars; if you will grant me your permission. My daughter, whom you now see, has no one to protect her in my absence, and I have no property left to support her. I therefore beg of you, for the love of honour and chivalry, and in the name of the most holy martyr St. Stephen, to bestow upon her a dowry, and appoint her a husband."*

"Sir Knight," said Arthault, pressing eagerly in between, "this is ill done! Our master has been so generous and liberal already, that he has nothing more to give. Away! Room for my Lord Count!"

At this scene, so interesting to the idle curiosity of some, and to the better feelings of others, a rush was made by the people towards the speakers, but almost noiselessly, so great was their anxiety to hear, and in a moment a dense circle was formed round the party. Count Henri looked for many moments sternly into the face of Arthault.

"Sir Bourgeois," said he at last, "you have spoken falsely, in asserting that I have no longer wherewithal to give away. Are not you my property, the serf of my domain? And is it not in my power to bestow what is mine own? Sir Knight, I give this man to you, and, in the presence of these witnesses, I warrant him your bondsman!"† And having so spoken, he instantly turned away, and passed into the church.

Arthault looked as if he had been struck by thunder, and was about to sink upon the earth; but in a moment his fainting senses were recalled by the rude grasp of the knight, who seized his prey by the throat; and as the two enemies gazed into each other's faces, the look of wonder, mingled with fear and horror in the one, contrasted strangely with the glare of exultation and revenge which illumined the features of the other.

* Joinville.

† This story is told with great *naïveté* by the Lord de Joinville, as an instance of Count Henri's *liberality*.

The crowd for some moments were dumb with astonishment ; but by degrees their feelings burst forth in various exclamations and Arthault had the farther misery to distinguish, in the shout which arose, an expression of the popular satisfaction at his downfall. Not the least interesting portion of the scene, however, was the part played by the bondsman's son. Insensible of his father's or his own disgrace, he was leaning distractedly over Amable ; who, oppressed by a crowd of contending feelings, had fainted the moment the sentence of the Count was pronounced. When she at last reopened her eyes, he lifted her up tenderly in his arms, and followed with his burthen her stern father, who, forgetful even of his beloved daughter, was engaged in dragging away the slave who had thus suddenly fallen into his domain.

As they passed the Château de Nogent, Arthault in vain entreated his new master to enter, offering to pay him down five hundred livres of ransom on the spot.*

"Come on, come on," said Sir Launcelot, fiercely, "it is time enough to talk of ransom ; you shall first visit the house of your lord ;" and they went on in silence. When they entered the old avenue, where the bondsman's foot had not been for many years—not since the noble oaks had been cut down, and thorns and brambles had choked up the once crowded path, and the hare had couched where the war-horse was wont to prance—he paused, and hung back for a moment.

This was the domain of memory. Every tree, every stone had its legend ; and the vacant places, where trees and monuments had once stood, were filled with shadows that seemed as palpable to the senses. It was here he had played with his noble companion ; it was along this avenue he had first passed in fear and curiosity, to obtain a view of the princely mansion ; it was in this place he had stood, abashed and almost appalled, with his bonnet between his knees and his hands crossed upon his breast, when a cortège of knights and noble ladies once floated along the path ; and it was on this very spot that young Launcelot, in midst of

* Joinville.

them all, had leaped from his horse, and, with a cry of joy, had thrown himself into his arms.

As they approached the ruined pile, a sensation of awe passed across the heart of Arthault. The drawbridge—that object of his boyish fear and wonder—it was firmly bedded in the earth, and the broken chains swung mournfully in the wind. As he crossed, the rank weeds waved against his knees, and the rotting, plank beneath, which was here and there still visible, looked like the coffin of some long-buried friend. The upper apartments of the house, he could see through the rents in the mouldering walls, were hung with ivy instead of tapestry, and the wallflower surmounted the broken turrets, where silken banners had once floated in the breeze. Arthault shivered as he passed into the cold, dark shadow of the ruin; the hoarse caw of a rook, which came from different parts of the interior, fell upon his ear with a boding sound; and he started at the flapping of black wings which passed the windows, as if he had seen a spirit.

The apartment which they entered appeared to serve at once for kitchen, hall, and sleeping-room. The knight's bed stood in a corner; one or two broken cooking utensils lay upon the fireless hearth; and on the single table with which the room was furnished there were a distaff, the fragments of a mirror, and a church missal. Two chairs, which bore the appearance of having once been gilded, closed the inventory.

The lord of this mansion of desolation, as if fatigued with his walk, sat down; and Arthault, in whose heart the past and the present were struggling as if in a chaos, turned his eyes upon his heretofore friend. The blight of sorrow and mortification had fallen upon those features once resplendent with manly beauty. The brow which might have imaged

—the front of Jove himself,

was ploughed into deep furrows; and

The eye, like Mars, to threaten or command,

presented a careworn, anxious expression, which spoke only too plainly of bitter days and sleepless nights. His beard neglected

—his grizzled hair—his faded dress, on which the family arms were still almost entire, through the patient ingenuity of pride and want—all contributed to form a portrait on which the spectator seemed to gaze as if in spite of himself.

Arthault was moved ; and at last his lip trembled as he gazed. This was the house where he had been cherished when a boy ! There sat his first patron, his early friend, the proud, the brave, the beautiful, the generous, the princely Sansavoir ! Perhaps his emotion was observed by Sir Launcelot, and excited an unconscious sympathy, for his look and manner gradually softened almost into kindness. He, too, thought of old times and feelings ; and it may be that his present triumph enabled him to think of them with less of bitterness than usual.

"Come, come," said he at length, in a gruff and sudden tone, as if ashamed of some fancied weakness, "let us now talk of your ransom. I accept the five hundred livres you have offered. Are you still in the mind to give them?" Arthault did not answer for some moments. At last he muttered, "No !" but it was in a hoarse and broken voice.

"No !" he continued, advancing with tottering steps, "not five hundred, but five thousand—all I possess—my lands—my houses—my gold ; they are a debt—all—are yours, my kind and noble patron—my early friend—my benefactor—my master !" and he threw himself upon his knees before Sir Launcelot, and seizing his hands, covered them with tears and kisses.

As quick as a sunbeam—as light and radiant as angels are pictured in our dreams, Amable flew and raised him from his knees, and seated him in a chair beside her father. She drew their arms round each other's necks ; and the knight, overcome with emotion, drooped his head upon his bondsman's shoulder, and the two old men sobbed aloud.

"You weep, Guillaume !" said Amable, with streaming eyes, "I am sure you weep—weep, or I will not love you !"

"Angel of light !" whispered the lover, hiding his averted face in her hair ; and when Amable found that her neck was wet with tears, she pressed him in her arms.

At this instant Count Henri entered the room, and advanced hurriedly to the group.

"How now, Sir Knight!" said he sternly; "what is this? Do you dare to trifle with me? An hour ago, you begged me to find a husband for your daughter, and now I see her—in your own presence—in a man's arms!"

Sir Launcelot appeared thunderstruck.

"My poor child!" said he, taking her by the hand, and leading her to the Count, "you forgot your father's cruel and impious oath—and so indeed did I. Sir, you may forgive her; she is as pure as was the first woman before she sinned. They were friends in childhood; they have been long separated—and they never can meet again!"

"Why, who is this young man?" demanded the Prince. "Me-thinks I know the face."

"Sir," answered Arthault, kneeling, "it is my son; and I entreat of you, for the love of God and St. Stephen, to name him as the husband of this lady, with whom he will not demand a livre of dowry."

"That may not be, my friend," said Sir Launcelot mournfully. "I have a vow in Heaven; and my daughter, were she to break her heart, can never marry a bondsman."

"Spoken like a noble and valiant knight!" exclaimed Count Henri: "it were a shame that a daughter of the Sansavoires should marry any but a freeman. But, to set the question at rest, I have already, in compliance with your request, provided her with a husband. Come, Madam, to-day you shall visit the Countess, and to-morrow the ceremony shall be performed before the Court."

"To that I say nay!" cried Guillaume, in a loud and furious voice, and striding between the Count and the door. "I too have an oath in Heaven; and so has the Lady Amable. Long before her father's vow, she swore solemnly to be mine, and mine alone. Sir Count, you are only our temporal prince, and have no power to stand between Heaven and man!"

"Back, presumptuous boy! Back, rebel slave! lest I smite you with my own hand, since there is not loyalty enough present to

punish your presumption ;" and the Count drew his sword. Guillaume's hand instinctively clutched his weapon. He did not draw, however, but stood grinding his teeth, while he muttered—

"O, would that I were a freeman and a knight !"

Arthault at first was struck dumb with terror and amazement at his son's frenzy ; but when he saw him still maintaining his position, even when threatened by the sword of the Count, he implored and commanded by turns, and at length endeavoured to drag him away by force.

"Stand back, father !" cried Guillaume, whose eyes were fixed with a gaze of growing joy and wonder upon the Count's cap—"Stand back, for the love of Heaven ! Can it be possible ? or is this but a dream ? By the holy St. Stephen ! I am right—it is my gage ! Sir Count, when you took up that glove you must have known that I was a bondsman ; and you cannot now withdraw from your knightly word. If you persist in the wrong you intend, I demand battle against you, in the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George !"

"I cannot fight with a serf," said the Count ; and he smiled admiringly at the young man's enthusiasm. "I make you free !—witness all present : and, beshrew my heart, if I do not think that I get almost too old to fight at all ! At any rate, in this case, I will employ a substitute. There is the gage, Amable—strike hard for the honour of chivalry !" and he pushed her towards her lover.

"Sir Launcelot," he continued, "although I perceive that you have settled your old scores with our friend Arthault, yet you and I have much to forgive each other. To see the dear and gallant friend of my family in such a situation as yours is a pain and disgrace which your obstinate pride had no right to inflict upon me. However, that is all passed. I have found a husband for your daughter, according to my promise ; and it will be hard if, among us all three, we cannot provide her with a suitable dowry. Sir Bondsman, we fine you, for your rude interference to-day, in another dinner at the Château de Nogent, and abundance of excellent wine. Lead on, Guillaume, and show your fair mistress

the house and gardens which will one day be her own; and, among the improvements you may talk of, I would suggest that a summer bower, raised on a certain seat on a grove near the wall, might be convenient for damsels who love the cool midnight hour, and for youngsters who challenge the ghost of King Arthur by moonlight!"

On closing the *Chronicle of the Lord de Joinville*, which has furnished the groundwork of the two last narratives, a few words may not be out of place on the subject of a work which is justly reckoned one of the most precious monuments of French history. The author, who was of an illustrious family in Champagne, was born between the years 1219 and 1229—for the learned differ with regard to the exact period—and was attached from a very early age to the court of Thibaud, King of Navarre and Count of Champagne. He was married, probably before the year 1240, to Alicia, daughter of Henry, Count de Grand Pré; and in 1248 set out with Saint Louis for the Holy Land. From this period he seems to have been almost constantly with the King of France, till a very short time before that monarch's death. All that is known of his person is from a traditional account heard by Du Cange at Joinville, which affirmed that the Seneschal of Champagne—for this office he inherited from his father—was of an extraordinary stature and strength of body, and that his head was of an enormous size, as large again as that of any of his contemporaries.

For two hundred years the *Chronicle of Saint Louis*, popularly attributed to this personage, passed unquestioned as one of the genuine sources of French history, till all on a sudden the literati of France were thrown into consternation by the posthumous objections of Father Hardouin (*Opera Varia*). These, notwithstanding the angry sneers of the Baron de la Bastie, were closely and ingeniously urged; and although the latter very learned person appears to have refuted them triumphantly, yet many imagined that their favourite chronicle was nothing more than a romance of the fifteenth century, which had been attributed, by a common literary fraud, to the Lord de Joinville. It would be improper, in a work like the present, to trouble the reader with any argumentation on the subject, but the writer of these narratives may be permitted to remark, that he finds, in the internal evidence of the history itself, more conclusive testimony of its authenticity and genuineness than even in the learned dissertation of M. de la Bastie. No writer of fiction has ever since identified so truly the man with the time and the action, and surely it is not to the fifteenth century we are to look for so nice and delicate a specimen of the art. A hundred touches of nature occur in the course of the work, which, if not the spontaneous effusions of a simple and manly heart, would have to be considered, with reference to the age in which they were produced, as indications of the

most extraordinary literary genius. It is impossible to rise from a perusal of this author without emotions of affection and delight.

It should have been noticed in the proper place, for the sake of preventing any cavilling at a supposed anachronism, that the term "Saracens," which so often occurs in the "*Pilgrim of Saint James*," was used by the early French writers to signify all people who were not Christians.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

fourteenth Century.

1307.—A singular and almost inexplicable event of the reign of Philip le Bel was the suppression of the Templars, an order of military monks, which had been established during the Crusades. They were arrested, tortured and burnt alive, and their wealth was given to the Hospitallers, afterwards the Order of Malta. It was very well to get rid of a body of men so strongly characterized by pride, tyranny, and debauchery; but as yet these were not crimes in the priesthood; and the inquirer into history finds it unpleasant to read of persons executed by means of a slow fire, as some of the Templars were, without apparent cause. Philip le Bel, by his taxes, alterations of the coin, and persecutions of the industrious Jews, contrived almost to ruin the country; and he died of mortification at the idea of people presuming to take it amiss.

1314.—Louis X., his son, being in want of money, sold liberty to a great many of the villeins, or peasant-serfs; the preamble to the edict for that purpose setting forth that "whereas, according to the law of nature, every one is born free." He also recalled the Jews, whom his father had banished, believing that they would be exceedingly useful in paying taxes; and in many other ways occupied himself with the good of the country.

1319.—Philip V., surnamed Le Long, reformed the public administration by excluding bishops from parliament. He was desirous of establishing an assimilation of weights and moneys in France; and, to put down the practice of private wars, he disarmed the bourgeois. He appointed captains over these citizens, who commanded them in the name of the King; and the communes, which had so generously defended a little tyrant from the great tyrants of feudality, began to be led on insensibly to hoist their protégé into supreme dominion.

In this reign the lepers, some way or other, fell into as bad repute, as the Jews, and, with these general sufferers, were burned in hundreds.

1322.—Charles IV. succeeded, and died without children. Edward III. of England, his nephew by the mother's side, applied for the vacancy; but the French nobles, deciding according to the Salic law, elected Philip de Valois, a descendant, by a younger branch, of St. Louis.

1328.—Philip carried war among the revolted Flemings, and afterwards succeeded in compelling Edward III. to do homage for Guienne. This scourge of France, however, took up arms in order to reclaim the crown. He beat the French in the sea-fight of L'Ecluse. He supported the Earl of Montfort in Brittany, and made a descent upon Normandy. He appeared under the very

walls of Paris, and retired into Picardy, followed by the enemy, who gave him battle at Crecy Here the French were beaten, as they say themselves, because they would not use cross-bows, but employed Genoese to do so; and because the English had the assistance of "villainous saltpetre" However this may be, a considerable portion of the fighting men of France were left dead upon the field, and Edward marched upon Calais, the capture of which has given rise to sundry pretty stories and fierce disputations

1347 — About this time a pestilence occurred, which swept off exactly a fourth part of the population of Europe It must have been a difficult task to make this calculation Persons went about whipping themselves with great vigour, in hopes to melt God to compassion by the sight of their lacerated backs

1350 — John, who succeeded Philip, commenced his reign by cutting off the head of the Count d'Eu, his constable, no one knew why He convoked the States General, and was surprised to find that some ideas had got abroad since their last meeting of the real use of such a body They would absolutely represent the people, or at least they would represent themselves, and the King was obliged to submit

1356 — John gave battle to Edward the Black Prince, who had entrenched himself at Poitiers with eight thousand heroes, and lost himself and an army of sixty thousand men He was carried prisoner to England, but liberated on the moderate ransom, for a king, of one half of France and four millions of gold crowns, reduced afterwards to a third of France and three millions of crowns. John, however, could not raise the money, and being a man of honour, he returned to England, where he died

• 1358 — During his absence the kingdom was governed by the Dauphin, who committed the favourite felony of kings in playing tricks with the national currency The people revolted, Paris was like a democracy and Marcel, the chief of the insurgents, had begun to establish a federation throughout the country, when the Dauphin escaped to Compiegne, and convoked the States-General In this confusion the nobles endeavoured to bring back the liberated serfs into their feudal chains, but the peasants being unwilling to comply, both parties cut each other's throats At last, when everybody was tired, the States-General at Compiegne granted all that was asked of them, Paris was blockaded, Marcel assassinated, and the Regent dauphin entered the city in triumph

1364 — Charles V. was prudent and clever He restored the finances, beat the English in Brittany, and finally hunted them out of France Du Guesclin was the hero of his time The people were kept employed, not only by the wars of the French and English, but by the difficulty of knowing who was the legitimate son of Saint Peter Several popes were elected at once, and each of them solemnly declared that he alone possessed the keys of heaven and hell The people did not know which to believe, but, as usual, they fought bitterly on one side or other.

1380.—Charles VI. succeeded; and after several struggles with his parliament, suffered a defeat. He carried war into Flanders, and after committing great carnage, returned, at the head of his army, to chastise his rebellious citizens of Paris. He thought of a crusade! Marching through a forest in search of one of his barons who had murdered the Constable de Clisson, he was met by a stranger who warned him not to advance; and thereupon the King became raging mad. Having recovered, he dressed himself as a satyr at a masked ball, and his dress taking fire he was again frightened out of his wits. A truce was concluded with the English, or there is no knowing how far the disorders which ensued might have gone.

In the fourteenth century some advance was made in knowledge—if it was only in astrology. Charles V. collected nine hundred volumes, and the monks translated a few Latin works.





The Phantom Fight.

Black spirits and white,
Red spurs and grey;
Mingle, mingle, mingle,
You that mingle may.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN the latter half of the fourteenth century chivalry, without losing any of its splendour, began to exhibit those symptoms of corruption and decay which mark an era observable in the

history of all human institutions. The distinctions which before were so jealously kept up between knights and squires, and squires and pages, became almost obsolete; the peculiarities of armour were lost; the lists of the tournament were thrown open; and almost any man who had a steel coat and a strong lance thought himself entitled to the appellation of brother in arms. In the other orders of society the same kind of revolution was perceptible. The merchants, elevated from poverty and servility by the effects of chivalry, began to raise their heads and look their patrons in the face; and the artisans did not scruple to inquire among one another what the merchants would be without them. Some rude and indefinite conceptions of political right floated confusedly through the whole mass of the people; and a kind of instinctive feeling seemed to spring up in the minds even of the poorest classes, which told them that EVERY man should have a voice in the conduct of the state of which he forms a part.

These ideas, however, being little understood even by those who held them, were unsusceptible of communication to the classes whose imaginary interests they opposed. Theology and dialectics, indeed, were taught in the universities; but the people had as yet only learned to reason with the sword and the club. The great merchants, it is true, who could also use the *argumentum ad hominem*—money, succeeded in making the King comprehend a small part of the subject; and at the convocation of the States-General, in 1355, astonished the nation all on a sudden, with the bold proposition, that it was but reasonable and polite to obtain the consent of the people before the financial fingers of government were dipped into their pockets. The rabble, however, not being admitted into the States-General, and not understanding logic, if they had been so, had recourse to arguments of more weight. They constructed maces, loaded with iron and lead, capable of sinking into the helmeted skulls where reasoning could never have forced an entrance. They then rose in a body, and began to pillage the castles and massacre the nobles.

In England, the same thing took place, and about the same time. The classes which were not represented in the legislature declined

the visits of the tax-gatherer, and demanded freedom. They marched upon London, under the conduct, or rather misconduct, of Wat Tyler, murdering and pillaging by the way ; and it seemed to depend upon the turning of a straw whether the government should not be overthrown and the nobility exterminated.

But the most lasting and extraordinary of all these commotions took place in Flanders, the Earl of which was a vassal of the King of France. Their origin goes far back in the century ; and so successful were the people in combating the power of their sovereign, that at one time the whole country, for seven or eight years, was under the government of one of themselves. Flanders was divided into several commercial towns, each jealous of the other's privileges, and all anxious to preserve their own. Ghent would have destroyed Bruges if it could, and Bruges would have destroyed Ghent ; but the two towns were ready to unite like bosom friends at any hostile act of the Earl affecting interests common to both. What was the particular cause of quarrel at the time this story refers to, it would take too long to investigate. Suffice it to say, that the insurgents, who called themselves the people of Flanders, accused the Earl of oppression ; and that after experiencing many of the vicissitudes of war, they found themselves masters of a great part of the country, under the generalship of the son of that citizen-king alluded to, who had at last fallen a victim himself to the rage of the fickle populace.

Philip Von Artaveld was an infant only five years old at the time of his father's murder ; and the family falling into comparative obscurity, he grew up to the age of manhood with scarcely a dream of the inheritance he had lost, or of the golden prospects that were one day to dazzle his eyes. He was born during the celebrated siege of Tournay, where his father, Jacob Von Artaveld, at the head of his gallant Flemings, sat down side by side with the King of England, the Duke of Brabant, the Duke of Gueldres, and the Earl of Hainault. He was baptized at the font of St. Peter's, in Ghent, in the midst of the highest nobility and chivalry of Europe ; and a queen took the vows for him—Philippa of England, after whose name he was christened. Every one looked to the baby of

the heretofore brewer of Ghent, "as towards a star," which was one day to illumine Flanders. These looks were prophetic, but, after the downfall of the family, forgotten, as prophecies usually are, till the day of their sudden and terrible fulfilment.

Artaveld, although apparently without the ambition, had all the haughtiness of manner which distinguished his father. Although strikingly handsome, therefore, his acquaintance was not generally sought; and at the period when some reverses in arms caused the citizens of Ghent to look round, in consternation, for a governor, his name occurred to only one man. This was Peter du Bois, the nominal chief of the insurgents, a rude, wild soldier, who cared little for the government of the town, "being solely desirous of leading every mad enterprise."* While the citizens, terrified with their misfortunes, were pausing in hesitation, and some inquiring whether it would not be better to lay down their arms, Peter du Bois, aware that the moment was critical, and that he himself had neither influence nor knowledge sufficient for the command, remembered suddenly, as the history of the struggle swept before his mind's eye, the family of the former chief. The next day was appointed for the election of a governor, who, under this name, should be the actual sovereign of the Flemings; and he hastened without an instant's delay to the retired abode of the Artavelds.

"Philip," said he, suddenly, "if you will listen to me, and follow my advice, I will make you the greatest man in Flanders!"

"How will you do this?" inquired Artaveld, in surprise.

"I will tell you how," said Peter. "We want a master in the town—a man of prudence and fair character. To these requisites you add a name, which need only be pronounced to stir the spirits of our fellow-citizens with the remembrance of the finest days of Flanders. Say the word, and I will make you Governor of Ghent!" Artaveld stared at the tempter for a moment, hardly ^{gan} to understand the offer; but, by degrees, his chest ex-
In Engl and his eyes brightened—all the father rushed into his
The classes w...

heart—and turning away, he walked up the room with a proud but unsteady step.

The struggle did not last long. The enthusiasm of young ambition was chastened by the spirit of policy, which is instinctive in the minds of men destined to acquire an ascendancy over their fellows ; and when Artaveld turned again to his visitor, it was with a calm, firm step, and an untroubled look.

“Peter du Bois,” said he, grasping his hand, “do this, and I swear by my honour, that in all the realities of power, you shall be more governor than I.”

“Is it so?” exclaimed Peter ; “there you spoke like an Artaveld ! But remember, my friend, this is no boy’s play ; you must bethink yourself that you are no longer angling with your rod in the Scheld and the Lis. Come, let me ask you a question. Can you be cruel and proud, as well as politic ? By the mass ! a leader of the rabble must be either dreaded or despised. The Flemings should be governed by the sword—nay, they wish to be so ; and among them men’s lives must be held of no more account than those of larks and swallows that are strung up in scores for the table.”

“All this I know,” said Artaveld ; “and you will find that I shall play my part without shrinking.”*

The next day, at the assembly of the people, where some proposed the Lord de Harzelle, and many more were silent in doubt and fear, Peter du Bois, by a well-timed speech, dwelling on the prosperity of Flanders under the government of the first Artaveld, turned the current of their thoughts into the channel he desired.

“Artaveld ! Artaveld !” was the cry ; “we shall have no other but he !” and the mayors, sheriffs, and deacons of trades, followed by four thousand of the populace, rushed tumultuously to his house.

“Gentlemen,” said Artaveld, with modesty and apparent hesitation, after he had been addressed by the authorities in the name of the citizens, “you require of me, I am afraid, more than I have

* *Floissart.*

the capacity to perform. In offering me the government of Ghent, you assuredly cannot have weighed the subject so maturely as you ought to have done. But it is the affection, you say, which your fathers had for mine that has principally induced you to make so honourable an offer to his son. Alas ! after my father had spent a lifetime in the service of his fellow-citizens, they murdered him ! If such is the recompense destined for the sleepless nights and laborious days you invite me to—for all the cares and dangers of a situation, which, from its very loftiness, only renders the holder a surer mark for foes and traitors—well may I pause and shrink at so fatal a gift !” So well did the newly-fledged politician act his part, that Peter du Bois himself was deceived, and exerted all his eloquence to persuade him to the acceptance of a state which Artaveld would have given body and soul to obtain. The entreaties of the citizens were at length successful ; and he suffered himself to be led to the market-place and proclaimed sovereign of Ghent.

Artaveld, although conducting himself at first with moderation and politeness, was not long of discovering the necessity inculcated by Peter du Bois for causing himself to be dreaded. Through the intervention of the neighbouring states, a great assembly was appointed to be holden at Harlebecque, for the purpose of taking into consideration the disputes between the Earl of Flanders and his subjects, and twelve citizens of Ghent were dispatched there as deputies. These men were, as they imagined, successful, and signed a treaty of peace with their lord, the sole condition of which was the surrender into the Earl’s power of two hundred men-at-arms, to be named by him. During the reading of this treaty by the deputies, at an assembly of the citizens of Ghent, Artaveld and Peter du Bois, who were present, attended by a powerful retinue, saw that the moment had arrived when, with them, the struggle was no longer for power, but for life or death. When the clause so important to the leaders of the insurrection was recited, which delivered over to the tender mercies of the Earl the principal objects of his hatred, Peter du Bois rose, and in a furious tone denounced the deputies as traitors.

"What!" he continued, "after so many sufferings and sacrifices, shall we end a glorious war by submitting to captivity or death the brave men who have led us on to liberty through the ashes of their homes and the blood of their families? Who does not understand that neither you, Guisebert Gente, nor you, Symon Bete, will be of the two hundred victims of tyranny? Up! Artaveld, and let us show the slaves who are masters here! Let those who love me cry 'Artaveld and liberty!' and strike home for freedom and for Ghent!" On the word, he drew his dagger, and, rushing upon Guisebert, plunged it into his heart; while, at the same instant, Symon Bete sunk lifeless under a blow from Artaveld. "Treason! treason!" was then shouted by their followers; and if fear had not tied their tongues, and glued to their scabbards the swords of the opposite party, a still bloodier scene might have ensued.*

This summary execution, however, did not ameliorate the situation of the insurgents. The Earl, enraged almost to madness, was more energetic than ever in his measures; he sought aid and alliance from all the neighbouring powers; hostile lines were drawn closely round the devoted town; and Ghent at last, blocked up from every kind of supply, was in a state of starvation. During the period of the famine, Artaveld was the good genius of the citizens. He opened the granaries of the monasteries and of the rich inhabitants, and compelled the flour to be sold at a reasonable price; and by unwearied labour and unbounded personal sacrifices secured the admiration and gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. When at length he could no longer answer the cries of the starving citizens, and the moment had arrived when defence was hopeless, he set out himself, at the head of a second deputation, to tender the submission of the town to the Earl, on the sole condition that the conqueror's vengeance should be satisfied with the perpetual banishment from Flanders of all who were disagreeable to him. These terms were rejected with every mark of contempt; and it was demanded, on the part of the Earl, that his rebellious subjects,

* Froissart.

from the age of sixteen to sixty, should march out of their gates bareheaded, and in their shirts, with halters about their necks, to the plain of Burlesquans, on the road between Ghent and Bruges, where he would himself remain in waiting to grant them pardon or put them to death, according to his pleasure.

When these terms were announced by Artaveld to the citizens of Ghent the utmost confusion prevailed. Some expressed indignation and some terror; and a numerous class, who fancied themselves secure from vengeance in their insignificance, were bent upon accepting them. In this conflict of sentiments the advice of their governor was asked, which, considering the posture of affairs, was judicious from its very boldness.

"Let us throw open our gates," he counselled, "since the Earl wills it so; but let it be to march out—five thousand tried men of us—and carry our answer in person to the despot where he is posted, at Bruges. Let the message be delivered with fire and steel, and in the midst of the thunder of war; let us strike one more stroke for our homes and families, for freedom and for Ghent. If we die, we shall at least die honourably, and our tombs will be holy places in the eyes of our children and of the world; while our friends and countrymen whom we leave here behind us will be no whit worse off than we all are now." A shout of applause burst from the pale lips of the multitude at this address; and the name of Artaveld was mingled with the war-cry of the city, "Ghent! Ghent!"

And they did march out, five thousand true and brave men, with trumpets sounding and banners flying.

"See what you are leaving!" cried the women, holding up their young children in their arms. "Yet, if you cannot return with honour, return not at all; for here you will find nothing but graves and ashes. The instant we hear of your defeat or death, we will set fire to the town, and die in the flames!"*

On the evening of the next day, the little army arrived within

* Froissart.

a league of Bruges, where they fixed their ribandeaus,* and passed the night. The next morning was fine and bright; it was the festival of the Holy Cross, when the inhabitants of Bruges were engaged in the customary processions; but much more solemn were the services in the Ghent army. Artaveld, with a rich and powerful eloquence peculiar to him, harangued them on the state of their affairs, sketching with a masterly skill the history of the war, and painting in glowing terms their heroic struggles and their wrongs. He was seconded by the priests, who, comparing their situation with that of the Israelites escaping from the bondage of Pharaoh, exhorted them to die, if necessary, for the glory of God and their country; and then, having divided their last morsel, and prayed what seemed to be their last prayer, receiving the holy sacrament upon their knees, they grasped their weapons, and stood firm for the approach of the enemy.

When the Earl of Flanders heard of the proximity of the rebels, although he could not help admiring their devoted valour, he was not the less determined to overwhelm and destroy them. Surrounded by eight hundred lances, including barons, knights, and men-at-arms, and followed by vast phalanxes of the citizens of Bruges, he marched out of the gates—"A handsome sight," says Froissart, "for there was upwards of forty thousand armed heads." On arriving at the enemy's camp, the men of Bruges, confident in the enormous disproportion of numbers, without regarding the commands of the Earl, ran blindly on to the attack, and were received with such a discharge of artillery as made them halt aghast. Artaveld at the moment, with his gallant townsmen, turning a marsh which was in front, placed the assaulters with the sun in their eyes, and crying their war-shout, "Ghent! Ghent!" rushed like a torrent into the midst. The men of Bruges were struck with a panic; they opened their ranks, threw down their arms, and in an instant the battle was converted into a massacre.

* These were long stakes shod with iron, which, fixed in front of the army, served as an enclosure.

The men-at-arms, surprised and bewildered, knew not what to do ; but at length, as it was impossible for eight hundred lances to withstand five thousand victorious troops, they, too, began to break their ranks, and fly in all directions. The Earl himself took the road to Bruges, with his banner displayed before him, but had scarcely entered the gates, when the men of Ghent rushed in with the flying citizens, slaughtering right and left as they rushed. The Earl escaped by changing his dress, and 'hiding himself in the hovel of a beggar ; but the other principal inhabitants of the town were mercilessly slain to the number of twelve hundred.

Damme next surrendered to the Ghent army, then Sluys, and successively every town and castle in Flanders except Oudenharde.

Artaveld, assuming the title of commander-in-chief, remained for some time at Bruges. All the rich and gay colours of his character were now brought out by the sun of prosperity. He lived in every respect like a prince. He had his minstrels to play before him at dinner and supper, and was served on the richest plate, as if he had been really the Earl of Flanders. He adorned his person with the costliest jewels, and the furniture of his palace exhibited all that was most rare or splendid in art.

In a progress through part of his new dominions, he was received with such homage as is usually rendered only to kings, and all swore allegiance to him as their sovereign lord. But at Ghent more especially, the incense of praise resembled more an offering to a god than to a man. Nor was it without cause that this city of trade looked upon him with a gratitude so unbounded. The town was actually inundated with wealth ; the river was crowded with vessels hastening to pour their rich freights into its storehouses, and the roads almost blocked up with waggons groaning under the spoils of a whole country.*

Artaveld now signed himself Regent of Flanders ; and his style

* The bread, which three weeks before was sold for an old groat, was now not worth more than four farthings ; and the wine, which was at twenty-four groats, was now sold for two.—*Froissart*

of living did no disgrace to the dignity. He established himself in an hotel fit for the greatest monarch in Europe, and appointed a numerous retinue of officers of the household—a treasurer among the rest, with an exchequer chamber for the receipt and disbursement of money. He gave splendid entertainments almost daily to the ladies and damsels of Ghent, when he presided in person, arrayed in robes of scarlet lined with fur*. When he travelled, it was in the style of a lord of that day, with his pennon displayed before him, blazoned with his arms, which were three hats argent on a field sable.

This mode of housekeeping could not be continued without extraordinary expense, and by degrees the heart of Artaveld became hardened with the selfishness of dissipation†. He imposed a tax throughout Flanders of four groats on every fire, the same which is known in other countries by the name of hearth-money, and caused it to be collected from rich and poor indiscriminately with unrelenting severity. This, and some other measures of a like nature, injured in some degree his popularity in the country, but Ghent, like most other capitals, was not unwilling to pay a few groats for the sight of a pageant, and there he was still the idol.

This routine of living, delightful at first from its novelty and splendour, at length began, as it usually happens, to become flat and wearisome. Even the dames and damsels of his bourgeois court seemed less beautiful and less engaging every day, in the eyes of the voluptuous Artaveld, as if already, by the lapse of a few weeks, the fresh charms of youth had faded into the deformity of age. He seemed at length to look almost with disgust on the waning beauty he had half worshipped before, and gradually acquired the habit of wandering melancholy and alone through the proud halls that had been wont, at his bidding, to echo to the strains of the minstrel and the tuneful feet of the brave and the fair.

* Peculiar to sovereign princes.

† "But oh! it hardens a within,
An' petrifies the feeling." BURNES.

He had for some time been in the habit, partly from policy, and partly perhaps from ostentatious vanity, of seizing every occasion of parading in princely state through the town and suburbs: but it was observed, as something remarkable, by the idle gossipers about his person, that on one pretext or another, he invariably avoided a certain street in the suburbs, which would frequently have seemed the most convenient and pleasant route for the procession. This exclusion seemed to involve a mystery exceedingly tempting to the imagination, and Artaveld endured with a very bad grace the hinted questions and surmises of his friends. He at length suddenly discontinued altogether the practice of walking in state wherever his business led him, and the affair was forgotten.

From this period his weariness, increasing to disgust, followed by uneasiness, might have been dated. One evening, after several hours spent apparently in troubled meditation, he started from his seat, and with the long drawn sigh which bespeaks the termination of some mental conflict, walked hurriedly to his private chamber. In a little while after, there was seen, by the dim light of the lamps, an armed man issuing from a side door of the hotel. His appearance bespoke him one of the military retainers of the regent, whose dress and accoutrements usually conveyed the idea of a citizen-soldier, being compounded of those of the peaceful bourgeois and the man-at-arms. No one suspected that this was the regent himself.

Artaveld, threading rapidly the mazes of the town, emerged into the suburbs, and took the way direct to that solitary street in the outskirts, which, although so frequently lying in the way of his official progresses, he had hitherto avoided. When he had at length entered the line of houses, which was bounded by the open country, his pace became slower, and his steps more unsteady. The street was dark and silent, the greater number of the inhabitants being in bed. The dwellings on either side were mean, and, generally speaking, dirty and uncared for, such as usually suffice for the abiding places of the poor. At the end, however, where the street was joined by a road through the fields, there was one,

retiring a little way from the path, which, although not larger than its neighbours, exhibited more taste and neatness in its external appearance than one would have looked for in such a situation. At the door of this cottage Artaveld stopped, after having in vain endeavoured to scan the interior through the curtained window. He tried the latch, and shook the door slightly, but, as soon as he heard the sound of approaching steps, withdrew into the shadow of a tree which grew near the wall.

The door was opened by a young woman, distinguished little by her dress from the lower order of the citizens, although a certain elegance in her air, and a resplendent beauty of face, impressed the beholder with the idea of one exempted, either by birth or fortune, from the debasing necessities of humble life*. She held up a lamp to look for the visitor who had shaken the latch, but when its light was reflected in the armour of Artaveld, she staggered back, and was constrained for an instant to catch at the doorway for support. Fear, however, did not seem to have prompted the action, for the next moment she stepped quickly up to the stranger, and held the light to his face. The lamp fell from her hand as the features of Artaveld met her view, and, with a wild scream, she sank fainting into his arms.

He had scarcely carried her into the house, when she recovered her senses, and shrank bashfully and embarrassed from his embrace.

"Mother," said she, addressing a very old woman who sat by the fire, and who might have been guessed, with more probability, to be her mother's mother—"here is Philip, dear mother, returned as one from the dead—the charitable soldier of the usurper's guard, who saved our lives during the famine." The old woman, shading her eyes from the light, looked up into Artaveld's face, and having satisfied herself of his identity—"It is Philip, indeed!" said she, coldly. "How dost thou, Philip? We thought you had

* It should be remembered that this story refers to a period when the lower classes were just escaping from the thralldom of the higher. At the present day there is nothing debasing in the "necessities of humble life."

been taken by the lord you deserted, and hanged long ago!" The young woman started, and coloured deeply.

"You will pardon my mother, Philip," said she, in a low tone of voice. "Time has been busy with his prey even during the short space that has passed since we saw you last. You perceive that she has forgotten the boundless debt we owe to your humanity—yea, and all things else, save the loyalty which has descended to us from our ancestors,—the only inheritance worth preserving of our poor and humble house."

"I can easily, my Marie," replied Artaveld, "pardon forgetfulness in another, so that you remember still. But is our poor mother so far advanced in dotage as not to know that loyalty to the Earl is an obsolete and by-gone feeling, only fit to be talked about at the fireside, when ancestral tales are rehearsed, and the auditors turn their heads round to gaze fearfully at their shadows on the wall? Has she not heard that the arms of the country have triumphed over those of an individual?—that the tyrant—yea, he whose inheritance was tyranny and misrule, has been hunted from the land he ruined—and that Philip Von Artaveld is the only Lord of Flanders?"

"Who is he that talks of Philip Artaveld?" cried the old woman, rising unassisted, and turning her almost sightless eyes, sparkling with supernatural brilliance, towards the visitor. "Accursed be the lips that poison the air of my dwelling with the traitor's name! Tyranny, does he say? Oh! who was the tyrant that rent open the almost closed sluices of civil war, and flooded the land again with his country's blood? Who tore from me the hope of my heart and the stay of my years—my seven bold sons, and my three fair-haired grandsons? Who murdered Symon Bete in the public assembly of the people? Who gave the word to slay!—slay! all the best and noblest of Bruges, when the anger of the Lord had delivered the town into his hands? Who dances this very night, with his harlots, over the tombs of the great and the brave, and taxes the widow's fire to pay the music?"

"This is raving!" said Artaveld haughtily, but in a disturbed

voice, as the old woman, exhausted by her vehemence, sank suddenly back into the chair.

"Call it so," said Marie, approaching him timidly, "and so, let it not anger you. She has borne, and bears much—she has seen her family die one by one, for what *they* deemed loyalty and honour. On this subject we can never agree: but oh! Philip, I did think, when you bade farewell to us last—I did so fondly dream—that ere now the right (such as I understand it) would have triumphed, and that all would have been well. My gallant father, as you have heard, was one of the best beloved of the Earl's officers; and one boon at least would have been granted to his orphan. My grandmother then would have been happy; and I should have had the opportunity my heart has so long panted for, of proving worthily the gratitude and—and—regard—of your poor pensioner!" Artaveld clasped her once more in his arms, and forgot for the moment that he was Regent of Flanders.

The old woman had sunk into the unconsciousness of dotage, and he drew gently out his fair and innocent mistress, to bid her farewell under the accustomed tree beside the door. The night was no longer dark. The moon shone brightly in the unclouded sky. Not a breath of wind sighed along the thatch, and not a whisper was heard in the deserted street. There stood Marie for a full hour, encircled in her lover's arms, and, unconscious of the cold of a November night, warm in her own bright hopes and holy recollections. Artaveld looked into the lovely eyes of his mistress, as they gleamed brightly in the moonlight, and dreamed no more of ambition or of war; and in parting, drank from her pure and blushing lips a happiness that his regal state and hollow vows had never purchased. Marie listened at the door till the music of his armed heels had died away in the distance, and then glided into her humble cottage to weave at will those glorious visions which the young heart spins, as Arachne does her web, from its own substance; while Artaveld retired to an illumined palace, to bury himself in the darkness of his own meditations, to throw himself upon a sleepless and feverish couch, to wish and unwish, to resolve

and then repent, to hope—to yearn, for virtue and for happiness, yet feel, or fear, that he was miserable and a villain.

It is impossible to say what were his real intentions at this time with regard to Marie ; but night after night he continued to visit at the cottage ; and in an age when the vassal's marriage depended upon the will of the lord, his avoiding any allusion to a consummation, usually understood to be the end and purpose of such intimacies, excited no surprise. It was soon observed by Marie, that at every visit his brow grew darker, and his thoughts more absent and uneasy. The rumours which filled the town with regard to the state of public affairs, might have accounted for such a change in the regent of Flanders ; but in Philip, the simple and generous soldier, it seemed mysterious, and at last alarming. Marie redoubled her attentions, and, sacrificing to love and compassion some portion of her maiden pride, sought, by playful caresses and tender expressions, to soothe the apparent anxiety of his feelings. The grandmother had by this time sunk into the lethargy which in very old age precedes dissolution, and her life seemed to be slowly and gradually passing away, like the flame of an expiring taper. The lovers, therefore, although a third person was always in the room, might be said to be alone ; and they had abundant opportunity to drink deep of that mutual passion, without which, after long habit has rendered it necessary, the heart withers and dies.

To very different scenes, and thoughts, and feelings, did Artaveld return from the home of his pure and beautiful mistress. The political storm had gathered, and the eyes of all Europe were turned upon him, to watch whether the expected thunderbolt was to sweep him to destruction, or roll harmlessly over his head.

The fate of Flanders was recognised by all thinking men as forming the index to the fate of Europe. The French nation, more especially, looked with intense anxiety upon a struggle, in which the Flemings were as the vanguard in the armies of the PEOPLE of all tongues and nations. The cry was already up on all sides—"Down with the nobles ! Down with kings and tyranny !" The whole mass of society was in a ferment. The profane

hand of the vulgar was stretched forth upon the objects and institutions most sacred in history; the storm howled through the long-drawn aisles of the cathedrals, and the images shook and rattled by the walls; the hoary tower of chivalry rocked to its foundation; and by signs and omens, and thunderings and lightnings, Heaven itself seemed to proclaim that some grand convulsion was at hand. In Paris, the clank of the armourer resounded in every street. Thirty thousand of the populace, harnessed from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, like perfect men-at-arms, and thirty thousand more, with long knives and leaden mallets, kept the blow suspended, waiting for news from the Flemings. At Rheims—at Châlons in Champagne, and down the whole course of the Marne—at Orleans, Blois, Rouen, and in the Beauvoisis—the word “Up for freedom!” was answered by, “Flanders! Flanders!”

The moment was indeed critical. The King of France was already on his march to carry into the wintry snows of the Netherlands a powerful army, for the purpose of crushing those presumptuous citizens who desired to be free. It is a matter of historical curiosity, to observe the determination with which the nobles set out on this expedition; for as to the King himself, he was only a boy of fourteen, and under the influence of the Duke of Burgundy, brother-in-law of the Earl of Flanders. They all vowed never to return into France, till they had tried the event of a battle with Philip Artaveld; and before leaving Paris, they arranged the order of the march with the same minute precision, as if an engagement was expected on the following day.

The vanguard, consisting of men-at-arms, cross-bows, and infantry covered with shields, was commanded by the Marshals of Flanders, France, and Burgundy; and between this body and a battalion of reserve, headed by the Earl in person, marched the King's battalion containing his three uncles, the Dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Bourbon, and all the flower of French nobility and chivalry. The rear-guard was led on by four counts and two lords, renowned for deeds of arms; and the sacred oriflamme of Saint Denis was carried by the gallant Sir Peter de Villiers, attended by

four knights.* It was disputed much, whether this holy banner could be displayed against Christians ; but the objection was overruled on the score of the Flemings, who called themselves Urbanists, entertaining opinions different from those of Pope Clement, and thus being out of the pale of the Church.

It was determined, although it was now in the month of November, to march upon Flanders by the most direct route, and force a passage across the Lis. When the vanguard, however, arrived at Commines, they found the bridge destroyed, and saw nine thousand resolute men on the opposite bank, under the command of Peter du Bois. The French were relieved from this dilemma, by the prompt gallantry of the Lord de Saint Py ; who, while the Flemings were gazing at the martial array before them, went quietly down the river, and by means of a single boat, sent gradually across great numbers of the troops. This was performed as much to the astonishment of the French commander, as of the enemy ; and when the Constable of France saw his men-at-arms on the opposite bank, with banners and pennons fluttering in the wind, and marching in a little battalion upon the town of Commines, the Chronicler tells us his blood "began to run cold, from the great dread he had of their being defeated."† Few as they were in number, however, they were mostly knights and tried men-at-arms. Shouting "Saint Py for ever !" they drove the Flemings before them at the point of the lance, carried the town by assault, and set it on fire. The bridge was then rebuilt under the direction of the Constable, and the King and his whole army crossed.

The important town of Ypres surrendered to the French army without striking a blow, and the example was immediately followed by ten castlewicks. Bruges, however, still held out under the gallant Peter du Bois ; and King Charles, learning that Artaveld had taken the field, and was marching to meet him, left Ypres, and encamped with his army near the town of Rosebecque.

When intelligence of the advance of the French reached

* Froissart.

† Ibid.

Artaveld, he was encamped before Oudenharde; but returning immediately to Ghent, he summoned to the field his citizen-warriors, and sending expresses to Bruges, Damme, Ardembourg, Sluys, and the sea-coasts, and to the Quatre Mestiers, and constablewicks of Grammont, Dendremonde, and Alost, he had soon under his command an army of fifty thousand men. This shows, in a very remarkable light the fierce and fearless character of the man; for, with the winter fighting on his side, he might have remained, had he chosen, entrenched at the siege of Oudenharde, without farther danger to Flanders or to himself.

His whole air and manner seemed to receive a colouring from the circumstances in which he was placed. Prompt, stern, and inflexible, he commanded the concurrence of his council, as much from awe as reason; and he carried the same fixedness of purpose even into the details of his private life. On the evening before leaving Ghent at the head of ten thousand men, as the *arrière-ban*, on his march to join the rest of the troops before Oudenharde, he sought once more the abode of his humble mistress.

"Marie," said he, almost fiercely, as he entered, "you must have heard the news. The Regent departs at daybreak to-morrow, to cut down, even as a reaper mows a harvest field, the pestilent crop of knights and nobles that have hitherto shed their baleful dews over the fair fields of France. The fortune of war, however, is uncertain; you must not stay behind; I will not leave you in a place that will be so defenceless when we are gone. Come, come, sweet love, gaze not at me thus, for time presses. Our mother shall be well cared for. A kiss—a blessing—a prayer, and my comrade will be here who is to receive from our hands this sacred deposit," and he turned towards the bed, "till the return of calmer, happier times."

"You say truly, Philip," replied Marie, in a solemn but tremulous voice, as she flung the lamplight upon the wax-like face that lay upon the pillow. "One will indeed be here this night to receive her from my arms—the Angel of Death!"

The soldier gazed for some moments in awe, and almost terror, upon the still face, where the damps of the grave seemed to be

already gathering ; but, as a sudden convulsion swept across the features, the expiring taper of life flared up once more before it was quenched for ever, and the dying woman opened her eyes. She looked strangely and inquiringly around, as if she had forgotten the faces that were beside her.

"Mother," said Marie, softly throwing herself upon her knees by the bedside, "Mother of my mother ! it is your child—your Marie !"

"What is that," asked the dying woman, in a whisper, "that armed shadow that glares upon me so mute and mysterious ? There is blood upon its hands, and pride and scorn upon its lip—and violent, sudden, and untimely death is written upon its brow !"

"Oh, mother !" cried Marie, shuddering, "it is Philip—our friend—our benefactor !"

"Philip ? What Philip ? Philip Artaveld !" and with an effort that seemed almost miraculous, she raised herself up in the bed, and extended her long hands towards the object of her curiosity and horror. "Artaveld !" she repeated. "It is he indeed. I know him well. That face has haunted me for many a weary day and sleepless night ; and now it comes to mock me on my death-bed ! Mock on, traitor to your sovereign and your God ! Mock on, slayer of the helpless, and spoiler of the widow and the orphan ! Short and bloody shall be your career, and sudden its termination ! Soon, very soon, shall we meet again at the bar to which I go to-night, to summon you. Even on this earth the wages of treason shall be your reward ; and, like your father of accursed memory, you shall perish miserably, slain in your guilt, by the very men in whose cause you have lost heaven and earth !"

"Sorceress, thou liest !" cried the soldier, suddenly. "When Artaveld dies, it will be in his war-harness, and on the field of battle."

"True—ha ! ha ! ha ! true——" said the dying woman, her strange laughter mingling with the death-rattle. "True, very true—in harness and on the field—and fighting bravely—ha ! ha ! ha ! And yet, like your father, without stroke of sword—and by the very men—ha ! ha !" and as her fearful merriment was swallowed

up in the last mortal agony that convulsed her frame, she dropped her head upon the pillow, and gave up the ghost.

Marie lay for some time insensible on the dead body; and when at last she re-awoke, her lamentations for such a loss would have seemed excessive and exaggerated to one who did not know by experience how cruel is the stroke of death, when it tears away from us those to whom our hearts are knit even from habit and circumstance.

"She is gone!" cried Marie, gazing with a despairing look on a face which, sleeping in the apathy of dotage, had for a long time past been quite as insensible to her grief or joy as it was now. "She is gone—my friend, my mother! and now I am indeed alone!" Artaveld, with less of kindness and consideration in his manner than it had ever before exhibited, strode gloomily through the apartment, his thoughts apparently absent and perplexed.

"Marie," said he at length, seizing her hand, "you are not alone, for I am with you. The ties that bound you to this cottage are now severed, and you must come with me to mine. Yet, take notice, that I hold out no advantage to you in the exchange, save the community you shall have with me in hearts, and hopes, and in the intercourse and charities of life. No more the quiet meal, the sweet evening prayer, the dream-delighted sleep! No more the whispered tale under our nightly tree, when the dull world slept around, and nought was awake save the bright hosts of heaven above our heads!"

"Philip, what mean you?" asked Marie, almost in alarm. Artaveld's thoughts were too swift for utterance, and she could read their working in his face for some time after his lips were silent. At length, after heaving a deep sigh—

"Come, come," said he, starting, "you know I am a soldier. I cannot lead you into groves and valleys, and woodland retreats. With me you must exchange the cottage for the camp, and the music of birds for the braying of the war-trumpet and the clang of arms. By daybreak the army will be in motion." Marie shrunk back.

"It is impossible!" she said firmly. "God knows, I would

follow you as cheerfully to the camp as to the court—but not in *his* wars, whom I have been taught to consider as a traitor, a voluptuary, and an assassin. Nature and Heaven alike forbid an impiety which would dishonour the living, and disturb my father and my kinsmen in their bloody graves.”

“Marie,” said Artaveld, his face growing pale with suppressed passion, “the battle which *must* take place within three days will decide the fate of Flanders and its defenders. If the Regent is beaten, you look upon me now for the last time, whether I perish on the field or not; for when taken—and there will then be no refuge in the country for the friends of freedom—I shall assuredly be dragged to the scaffold!”

“That you shall not!” cried Marie, with a sudden spring, while her cheek flushed and her eye lightened;—“that you shall not indeed! Upon my life, upon my soul, you shall not perish on the scaffold! To the camp! to the camp! Away! I am resolved. Go on, for I will follow you!—I do not doubt,” she added, hesitating, and in a low tone of voice, “I have not the faintest shadow of doubt, that your wishes are those of a man of honour—but, remember, till that fateful battle is over, I am nothing more than your sister. Do you promise?”

“I swear it, by my sword and by my faith—by all that is holy and honourable!” Artaveld then seizing the moment of enthusiasm, encircled her waist with his arm; and they had almost gained the door of the cottage, when, with a start of recollection, Marie ran back to the bed, and clasping her hands above the corpse—

“Again impossible!” she said, in a voice of agony; “I cannot leave her here. I must bury my dead, according to the laws of God and man, whatever becomes of the living.”

“And so you shall,” said Artaveld, “and that instantly.”

“Alas! you forget that it is now midnight. The priests are many hours in bed—and will they listen to the call of such as we?”

“Ay, love, if we only call loud enough. By the mass! I have a voice that shall make every priest in Ghent start from his sleep,

as at the sound of the last trumpet. Get ready, as is needful, I will send in some neighbours to assist, and in a quarter of an hour the chanters shall be at the door."

Marie, surprised and stupefied, did as she was bidden. The corpse was washed and arrayed in its grave garments, and speedily a numerous procession of priests arrived at the cottage to receive it. Supported by Artaveld, she placed herself as chief mourner behind the body. The voice of the chanters rose with a strange wild swell upon the night, and in a moment the cortege moved on.

The high altar of the church was already lighted up, and as the procession passed slowly along the nave, troops of monks and nuns, approaching from either side between the pillars, filled up the picture. Bewildered by the imposing scene, Marie scarcely heeded the commencement of the service. Her eyes were fixed, as if by fascination, upon Artaveld, who, with an art that seemed akin to the magician's, had thus instantaneously called out from the bosom of darkness and silence those sights and sounds of awful grandeur. He stood, tall and motionless, in the shadow of a column, with his hands crossed upon his bosom, and the visor of his helmet down. The ceremony was at length over, the dead was hidden for ever from the eyes of the living, and the actors in this last scene of the drama of man's existence were seen departing in troops, and vanishing in the night.

Marie remained for some time in silent prayer, but was at length drawn gently and gradually away from the church by her lover. Soon he quickened his steps, and throwing his arm round her waist, seemed rather to carry than support her. Bewildered by the darkness, and the speed with which they walked, she soon lost all recollection of the streets through which they passed, but presently the rattling of the chains of the draw-bridge, and the challenges of the sentries, informed her that they were entering within the gates.

They hurried, without exchanging a word, through numerous narrow streets and winding passages, till at length, on entering a large gloomy-looking building, they began to ascend a steep stair-

case in absolute darkness. Voices, however, were heard at no great distance, and shouts, that seemed of drunken merriment, rung from different quarters of the mansion.

By-and-by, as they reached a great corridor, they could hear hurried footsteps, and two persons conversing as they passed.

"Where, in the name of all the fiends," cried one, "can the Regent be?"

"We shall wait no longer," said his companion. "I will go sound the tocsin, and summon the citizens; for if Artaveld were alive, he would not be absent at a time like this." Artaveld stopped suddenly, and seemed to deliberate. At length, leading his mistress into an apartment almost as dark as the corridor—

"Wait my coming here," said he; "bolt yourself in, and fear nothing; I shall be with you again before you have time to recover breath after our hasty walk." Marie, continuing passive as before, answered not a word, but remained for a considerable space standing on the same spot, and so confused and bewildered in her faculties, that at times she asked herself with a start, whether she was not in the midst of some strange dream. The silence and solitude of the place at length became irksome; and, with a natural curiosity, she unbolted the door, and put out her head to listen. All was silent. She then walked on tiptoe a few paces into the corridor, and looked with straining eyes in the direction her lover had taken. The darkness was impenetrable. She advanced a few paces farther, and then paused and listened again. A faint light in the distance attracted her eyes and feet, and by degrees she had wandered a good way from the door. At this moment she heard the sound of approaching steps; and shrinking close by the wall, she waited, in great fear, although half hoping that it might be Philip himself, till the comer should pass by.

This person appeared to be one of the officers of the court, staggering bedward from a debauch, with a light in his hand. Marie was only imperfectly concealed; but, occupied with the difficult task of piloting himself through an almost straight channel,

he reeled past without observing her. The next moment, however, he stopped and turned round ! and Marie, seized with a sudden panic, darted from her hiding place and flew along the corridor, till she struck herself with such force against a column midway, that for some moments she lost her senses. On recovering, all was silence and darkness as before ; and having lost every trace and recollection of the way she ought to pursue to regain the chamber, she groped on at random, terrified at the noise of her own footsteps, and bitterly blaming the idle curiosity which had exposed her, and perhaps her lover, to a danger that seemed the more terrible from its being so formless and indefinite.

The name of power and terror she had heard pronounced—that name which had so often scared her dreams, and made her bless herself from the power of bad spirits, when starting at midnight from her troubled slumbers, had chilled her very heart. She was now in the den, almost within the grasp, of the dreaded Artaveld. The little she had been able to observe only proved the truth of the tales which charged him with habitual riot and debauchery ; and as her imagination passed onward in the scale of crime, when any object of dubious substance impeded her foot, she withdrew it, shuddering.

She at length reached a door, through the chinks of which she could perceive that the apartment within was lighted up ; and here, while pausing in hesitation, a voice struck her ear which made her heart leap with joy, for it was that of Philip. Presently, a slight noise, as of persons retiring from the room by another egress, ensued ; and Marie, fearful of losing her lover again, suddenly opened the door and went in.

A man, dressed in a scarlet cloak, furred with ermine, most magnificently decorated, was seated at a table where implements of writing were scattered about. His figure was half averted, as he leant his elbow on the back of the chair on which he sat, while he covered his face with the other hand, like one plunged in meditation. Marie's terrified glance rested but for an instant on this stranger ; for, as she detected a circle of gold passing round a sort of cap which he wore, her heart misgave her that she was in the

presence of the usurping traitor himself.* The last of the retiring company was in the act of disappearing by a door at the farther end of the room, and as she saw, or fancied, a resemblance in his figure to that of her lover, she could not refrain, in her sudden fear, from calling out his name—"PHILIP!"

"Who calls? Here am I!" said the diademed stranger, starting from the trance of care into which he appeared to be plunged; and as he turned round, he disclosed the features of Philip himself.

Marie's blood froze within her veins at the sight, a mist swam before her eyes, and she only prevented herself from falling by leaning with both hands upon the table towards which she had staggered. And thus Artaveld and his humble mistress gazed for many moments in silence into one another's faces.

"Minion," said Philip haughtily, as at last he felt his eye sink beneath her's, "what would you with the Regent of Flanders?"

"Nothing—nothing with the Regent!" answered Marie, in a faint and faltering voice. "I pray you, pardon me—it was a mistake;" and she turned round, and with feeble steps walked towards the door.

* It is probable that the coronets of the nobility, with the exception of those of the dukes, which are supposed by Du Cange to have been granted by Charles *le Chauve*, came into use not long before this period, for Selden proves by a passage in Villehardouin, that in the year 1200 the Marquis of Montferrat, the Earl of Flanders, and various other Counts, wore no crowns; while it is certain, from some inventories in the Chamber of Accounts at Paris, dated 1350, that they were worn by the Count d'Eu. Du Cange notices various instances, occurring between the years 1340 and 1479, of simple gentlemen surmounting their helmets with coronets; and it was no doubt owing to this arrogation of their ancestors, that in process of time so many families, without estates or dignities, conceived that they possessed a hereditary right to the coronet, and therefore to the titles of marquis and count. Hence the numbers and poverty of the French nobility of later ages. The royal crowns of the French were at first merely diadems of gold, or strings of pearls, encircling the brow; and it was not till the time of Francis I. that the close crown came to be worn—an innovation supposed by Du Cange to have been partly in rivalry of the English princes, who had long worn such, and partly to distinguish the sovereign *par excellence* from the dukes who wore the fillet-diadem. Other writers, however, imagine that Francis set up an opposition crown against his enemy, Charles V. of Germany.

Artaveld did not at once endeavour to prevent her from leaving the room. He sat, as if fixed to his chair by enchantment ; and at that moment a pang passed through his heart, greater perhaps than any he had yet endured in his career of ambition.

When Marie, however, had nearly gained the door, she heard his swift steps behind her ; and in another moment, passing his arm round her waist, he carried rather than led her back into the full blaze of the lights.

" Marie," he cried, dashing off his diademed cap, and flinging back his hair from his pale forehead " Look, I am Philip !—he whom you loved—he, on whose shoulder you have often leant in the moonlight, when no sound was heard more earthly than the beating of his heart, as it throbbed against yours ! I am he who stood by the grave of your mother, even as a son—he whom the saints and the destinies have given to you for a husband ! What would you more ?"

" You are not Philip," replied Marie, her voice interrupted by those painful sobs which are unaccompanied by tears ; " you are not the Philip whom I loved—the simple, gallant soldier whom I so dearly loved ! whose faults were the faults of circumstances—whose very crimes were not unlovely, *being the effects of early prejudice, and a mistaken sense of duty.* Why talk you of the destinies ? Do you remember the last words of my mother ? God would never permit, far less command, such a sacrilege ! The false oracles to which you listen so devoutly, are the voices of the evil passions within you !"

" These are the destinies !" cried Philip suddenly, and almost flinging her from his arms—" these are the destinies !" and, striding away, he smote his breast so fiercely, that the apartment rung to the sound. When he approached her again the storm of passion had swept by, and his face was serene, and his manner coldly calm.

" Marie," said he, " this explanation has been somewhat sudden, but that is more your fault than mine. Had not your curiosity, or your fear, or whatever motive may have actuated you, led to the overthrow of my plans, the fate of Flanders and its Regent would

have been decided before you knew that the names you loved and hated were both borne by the same individual. And even then, indeed, it would have depended upon circumstances whether I would have permitted the discovery to take place at all.

"Your having arrived so prematurely, however, at such knowledge, does not alter the relations which subsist between us; neither does it alter my intentions with regard to you. Your promise was made to me neither as a chief nor as a private soldier, but solely as a man; and I claim its fulfilment, at least thus far. You shall remain, as was determined, at my disposal, till after the decisive battle is over; nay, you shall accompany me to the camp, and hear with your own ears the shout that shall tell of triumph or defeat. Till then my lips shall never address you but as a friend. If I am slain you will lose a husband, and perhaps a master; if I am conqueror——"

"But if you lose, and yet be not slain?"

"That may hardly be," replied Artaveld, smiling grimly.

"But if it should be so?"

"Why, then, I shall be a private soldier again!"

"I yield!" said Marie suddenly; and her eyes sparkled through tears that rose into them for the first time during the interview.

That night she lay in a rich chamber attended by a serving woman; but she had not been able to compose her agitated mind to sleep before she heard the tramp of horses and the roll of drums around the house, as the troops began to muster for their early march.

King Charles, in the meantime, had encamped on a plain near Rosebecque, where he awaited the approach of the Flemings. On the evening of Wednesday he gave a supper to his three uncles, together with the Constable of France, the Lord de Couci, and some other foreign lords from Brabant, Hainault, Holland, Zealand, Germany, Lorraine, and Savoy.* After the departure of the stranger guests, some conversation took place among the King, his uncles, and the Constable of France, which shows in a striking manner the

* Froissart.

character borne by the last-mentioned personage, the celebrated Sir Olivier de Clisson, in the army. It had been arranged in the council, without his knowledge, that, for the better safeguard of the King's person, Sir Olivier should give up, for the day of the battle, his office of Constable, which required his presence in the van, and remain behind with the royal staff. On this being communicated to him, the surprise and grief of the Constable were extreme.

"Most dear Lord," he said, "I know that I never can be more highly honoured than in guarding your person; and I by no means pretend that the business in the van cannot be done without me; yet, having myself drawn up the army, and instructed them in what manner to receive the foe, my absence at the moment of the shock may be attended with disastrous consequences. I therefore entreat of you, most dear Lord, that you will not interfere with the prior arrangements, which were all made for the best; and in which, I do assure you, you will find your advantage."*

The boy-King was quite unprepared for reply to this address, and would only assure the Constable that it was solely from the confidence he had in his valour and talents, that he wished to have him near his person; and when Sir Olivier again, in a firm and manly manner, repeated his entreaties to be allowed to act as Constable—

"Be it so, then," said Charles; "you know better than either I or my council what should be done. Away, Sir Constable, and act as you will, in the name of God and St. Denis!"†

On Thursday morning, it being well known from the reports of the foragers, that the day could not pass without a battle, all the men-at-arms of the army—van-guard, rear-guard, and King's battalion—armed themselves completely, excepting the helmet, which it was not customary to assume till just before engaging; and, mass being heard, scouts were sent out to reconnoitre the position of the enemy.

Artaveld was not far off. On the Wednesday evening he had taken up a very handsome position between the hill and the town

* Froissart.

† Ibid.

of Rosebecque, where the King was quartered, having a ditch on one side, and a grove on the other, and in front a hedge of considerable strength. In the evening, he also had his official supper, as well as the King of France, and around the magnificent board were marshalled hearts not less stout and true than those which at the same moment honoured the tent of royalty.

"Sirs," said he, rising at the close of the entertainment, "before you return to your quarters, I would claim your attention for a moment. At no great distance, in front of our lines, there is a powerful enemy, with whom in the morning, by the permission of God, we are to engage in mortal fight. This enemy is no less a personage than the King of France, attended by the whole flower of the French nobility and chivalry. Sirs, in comparing the strength of two hostile parties, there are two points in which it must be considered, one moral, and one physical. We must not only inquire what are their numbers, their arms, and their discipline, but what are the motives which lead them to the field—by what spirit they are actuated in the fight, and what are the recollections of shame or glory which elevate or cast down their souls.

"With regard to the material of our army, it is only necessary to say that we are in every respect the equals of the French. We are the same men who conquered at Bruges, and answered the cry of 'Flanders for the Lyon' with the nobler battle-word of 'Flanders for the People.' We are they, who, in the midst of the hurrah of triumph, drank the healths of our ladies at Damme, in the wines of Poitou, Gascony, and La Rochelle, and who relieved the hunger of our besieged comrades with the fine bread of Sluys.

"But in the other, and higher consideration of cause and motive—what a difference does there appear between the French and us! *They* are the invaders of a country whose only crime is a determination to be free; *we* are the men themselves of the glorious land, whose very soil seems to have bristled up into knives and lances at the echo of the tread of tyranny. We fight for liberty—to preserve the franchises of Flanders—for the eternal and unalienable rights of man.

"Sirs, there is but one other circumstance I would suggest to you, and then I shall dismiss you to your rest. We are not alone in this great cause. The spirit of liberty is abroad in Europe, and the people of all tongues and nations are our allies. In France more especially, the event of our struggle is awaited with intense anxiety. The enemies of the people there are ours—they are the French nobles, with whom we are on the point of battle. Not a man of these lordly oppressors, when baffled here, must be permitted to return home to rivet the chains which his countrymen only wait the word from us to throw off! Spare the poor, the ignorant, the misled, but slay the nobles—slay them with the edge of the sword—slay one and all! As for the King, he is but a child; raise not your hands against his life. We will carry him back to Ghent, and teach him FLEMISH—the language of liberty!"*

This speech was received with a shout of enthusiasm; and, in the fierce and bitter spirit of the times, the answer, by unanimous acclamation, was, "Death to the nobles!"

When Philip was left alone in the tent, he sat for some time as motionless in his chair as if he had fallen asleep. Everything was silent; for the sound of the slow and measured footsteps of the sentinel without, accorded so well with the character of the scene, that it seemed as it were to form a part of the stillness of the hour. The neglected tapers burnt so dimly, that ever and anon the moonlight, streaming through the openings of the canvass athwart their flame, gave a spectral paleness to all things around; and as Philip, starting in the midst of his meditations, threw a hasty glance round the tent, he felt a sensation creeping over him, resembling the thrill of indefinite terror which sometimes freezes the quick blood of boyhood when deserted by the angel of sleep, at the mystic hour of midnight.

Then rose upon his waking dream, slow, mute, and silent, the phantoms of the past. The faded colours of the pictures of former years were renewed before his eyes, as in a magic glass;

* Froissart.

and the awful forms of the dead, gliding stately across, seemed to point significantly, as one by one they vanished, towards the fateful fields of Rosebecque. Among the rest was the pale and bloody figure of Symón Bete, and a strange expression of triumph appeared to mingle with the same look of horror with which he had gazed on his murderer, when Philip stabbed him in the town-hall of Ghent. Nor was Marie's mother wanting in the unearthly show: her face, in which the glittering eyes seemed to have survived the other features, that were as pale and lifeless as a mould of wax, was before him with ghastly distinctness, and her last words, filled with mystic meaning, were anew shrieked in his ears. Suddenly, the figure was transformed before his fevered sight, and its look of mingled menace and derision was gilded by superhuman beauty. It advanced suddenly, and Artaveld staggered back.

"In the name of God, I defy thee!" said Philip, grasping his sword.

"My Lord, are you unwell? methought you called; you are pale! you tremble!"

"It is cold, child," said Philip, recovering; "another cup of wine. Why are you not in bed, Marie?"

"Sir, I have been in bed, and am risen, for I could not sleep. I am feverish with watching. I thought that your apartment was filled with company, but not those who supped with you; and then I heard a voice——"

"What voice?"

"Philip, I thought it was my dead mother's! And then you called, and I rushed in, expecting I know not what, and behold, you were alone!"

"It is phantasy," said Philip. "This is the hour when the things and persons of the present world being shrouded in darkness, the spirits of memory walk the night. Go in, Marie; invoke the protection of your good angel, and try to sleep."

"Sir, I am feverish. Methinks the atmosphere within is close and heavy; I would you would permit me to walk out into the air before the tent."

"Be it so, then; but tarry not long, for you have need of sleep."

Marie indeed had need of sleep, for she had not closed her eyes since the night of her parent's death, and her brain was dry with watching. The moment decisive of her destiny was at hand; and sometimes she grew pale with superstitious fear, as she thought of her mother's denunciations against the man whom, in the event of victory, she would be compelled to marry; and sometimes her paleness was chased by the flush of maiden indignation, as she inquired whether, indeed, she would be allowed the alternative of marriage with the Regent of Flanders. Philip was strangely altered: his eye was fierce even when it rested on hers; and his temper was proud, harsh, and imperious.

Marie had not been all her life in seclusion; she was a soldier's daughter, and had seen many battle-fields; and her quick eye discovered at a glance the advantages of Artaveld's position, and the masterly arrangement of his army. Success, so far as human means could command it, seemed to her to be almost certain; and she could only pray for his defeat. It is singular, that with the idea of defeat there was never combined that of Philip's death; but Marie was only a girl, and, in spite of all that had occurred, she loved him still; and when she beheld in imagination his routed army flying before the foe, she only thought of his words, "Why, then, I shall be a simple soldier again!"

It was a moonlight night, but only clear by fits; for, although all was as calm as death below, clouds were hurrying across the sky, as if a tempest raged in the upper regions of air. Suddenly she heard a singular noise in the direction of Mont d'Or, an eminence between the camp and Rosebecque. Whether it was owing or not to her fevered imagination having dwelt so long upon scenes of war, cannot now be ascertained, but she did imagine that the sound resembled the shouts of battle; and at length she saw, or imagined she saw, distinctly, various moving bodies passing and re-passing on *Moun* d'Or*, like the divisions

of an army in motion.* At the same time, shadows resembling columns of smoke rose into the air, and sparks of fire shot along the sky in different parts of the heavens.†

Transfixed with surprise, Marie continued to gaze upon Mont d'Or, till the moving masses appeared to change in some measure their character, and, instead of an army taking up or leaving its position, a magnificent battle-scene broke upon her view. The sound, which before had been monotonous and indistinct, appeared to separate into its component parts, and "Montjoye Saint Denis!" and other cries, assailed her ear.‡ At these sights and sounds, Marie forgot her late wishes, and what had seemed to be her true interests; and she rushed back instinctively into the tent, crying out, "Philip, Philip! The French are on Mont d'Or!"

Artaveld, snatching up his battle-axe, instantly hastened to the spot she had left; and, on receiving a confirmation of the news from his own eyes and ears, ordered, in a furious tone, the alarm to be sounded, and the captain of the guard dragged before him.

"Sir," said the officer, in reply to his reproaches, "all the sentinels in our army have been disturbed by these things for some time past, and reconnoitering parties have been repeatedly dispatched to enquire into the cause. On arriving at the spot, however, they can find nothing; and every inch of ground on Mount d'Or has been ridden over again and again, without an enemy being discovered."§ Philip was struck dumb with amazement, and, dismissing the crowd of officers who had assembled at the blast of the trumpet, remained alone with Marie, and renewed his gaze upon the unearthly show.

Marie had gazed till her brain was on fire. While Philip was employed in examining the captain of the guard, an idea had struck her that the phantom-fight was a sign sent by Heaven to indicate that Mont d'Or was the place on which the battle of next day, in order to end well for the cause of love and loyalty, should take place; and the shadows, which were visible to so many, were appropriated by her imagination exclusively to its own purposes.

* Froissart.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

"It seems to me," said Philip, "like a tournament of spirits; the devils, doubtless, are rejoicing at the abundance of prey they expect in the morning."*

"It is no tournament," replied Marie, "but the shadow of to-morrow!"

"Say you so?" said Philip eagerly, "and how goes the day? What cries are these?"

"The cries on one side are, 'Montjoye Saint Denis!' and 'Flanders for the Lyon!' and on the other, 'Ghent! Ghent!' and 'Artaveld for liberty!'"

"Tell me, how goes the day? I cannot see! Curses on that murky cloud which has covered the moon! What are these on the right—that are giving way? What battalion is that which tramples down the infantry like a tempest laying flat a field of standing corn? Ha! who is he, that single figure in the midst? But they are going—they are vanishing. Did you see his crest? They are gone—and all is dark!"

"The last was Philip Artaveld!" said the interpreting priestess.

"Alive, and at the end of the engagement!" cried he, exultingly.

"And without wound," added Marie.

"Then the beldame lied in her false throat, and I am still Regent of Flanders!"

"It was death my mother foretold," said Marie, "and no wounds!"

"Ay, death! and at the hands of my own men of Ghent—my brave! my true-hearted! False witch, she is now howling for that! But come, get you in, the day begins to break, and a few hours will settle all."

As soon as it was light enough, Philip, leaving the women, varlets, horses, and baggage in the rear, advanced his troops to a still stronger position in the plain, where they had a wide ditch in front, and behind a wilderness of brambles, junipers, and other shrubs. Here the army was numbered, and found to consist of.

* Froissart.

fifty thousand chosen men, who valued their lives not a straw, including sixty English archers, who had stolen away from Calais for the sake of higher pay.

The men of Ghent, to the number of nine thousand, were in the van, with banners displayed, and Philip himself at their head. Immediately behind them stood the troops from Alost and Grammont; and, successively, those from Courtray, Bruges, Damme, Sluys, and the Franconate. They were armed, for the greater part, with bludgeons, iron caps, jerkins, and whalebone gloves, with long knives hanging to their girdles. Each man had a staff with an iron point, and bound round with iron; and the different townsmen wore liveries and arms to distinguish them from one another. Some had jackets of blue and yellow; some wore a welt of black on a red jacket; others were chevroned with white on a blue coat; others green and blue; others lozenged black and white; others quartered red and white, and others all blue. Each company carried the banner of its trade.* The whole of this force was on foot, with the exception of a young page, who was mounted on a superb courser, worth five hundred florins; which, on the defeat of the French, was to be made use of by Philip, as a chronicler relates, for the purpose of giving effect to his orders for the massacre of the nobles.†

In this strong position they remained till eight o'clock; when, seeing nothing of the French, and being almost frozen with cold, loud murmurs arose in the ranks, and the men desired, with one voice, to be led against their enemies. Philip, whose mind was still filled with the idea of Mont d'Or, was not slow in complying with a wish which seemed born of destiny; and he accordingly broke up his position, and marched to the scene of the Phantom Fight. He issued only one general order to the troops preparatory for the battle; and this was, that they were on no account to open their ranks, but to interlace their arms, and support one another, and march forward with a steady and determined step ‡

* Froissart.

† Ibid.

‡ Froissart contradicts himself in estimating Artaveld's military talents. In one place he says that he well knew the art of war; and in another that he was wholly ignorant of it.

When the scouts of the French returned with the news of the ultimate movement of the Flemings, King Charles ordered the Constable to advance, in the name of God and St. Denis. Till now the morning was so dark that the troops could hardly see each other; but no sooner was the sacred oriflamme displayed than the fog instantly dispersed, and the sky was seen bright and clear.* At this moment a white dove was observed to circle several times round the King's battalion, and then perch upon one of the royal banners, and, inspirited by so decisive an omen, the army moved on with alacrity to meet their enemies, who were now close at hand on Mont d'Or.†

"It was a fine sight," says the chronicler, "to view their banners, helmets, and beautiful emblazoned arms: the army kept a dead silence, not uttering a sound, but eyed the large battalions of Flemings before them, who were marching in a compact body, with their staves advanced in the air, which looked like spears, and so great were their numbers, they had the appearance of a wood."

The Flemings commenced the engagement with iron bars, and quarrels headed with brass; and so irresistible were their numbers and compact array, that the King's battalion fell back. The van and rear-guards, however, came instantly up on either side, and plunged their Bordeaux lances into the living mass. The front ranks recoiled in pain and terror, as they found that their armour was no defence against this fearful instrument; and thus, in a very short time, the whole army was squeezed so inextricably together, that they could not raise their weapons to strike a blow.

The battle—if it can be called a battle at all—was now over; for, the King's battalion returning to the charge, the Flemings were hemmed in on three sides, and knocked down with battle-axes and leaden maces, like bullocks tied to a stake. The van was thus wholly destroyed, either by suffocation or blows; and the rear, in astonishment and dismay, took to flight.‡

* *Kroissart.*† *Ibid.*‡ *Ibid.*

High and haughty was the voice of Philip Artaveld, at the beginning of the confusion. He rushed through the thicket of men, steadying the ranks, rallying the dismayed, encouraging the bold, and shouting the inspiring war-cry of liberty. His efforts were unavailing. Dense and more dense became the mass, from the constant recoil of the front ranks; and at length his Ghenters, surrounding their almost adored leader in a body, endeavoured to force him off the field. At the moment a mightier rush was made towards the centre. The French pillagers, gliding in between the men-at-arms, cleared the way with their knives; and so headlong became the assault, that many of the conquerors, entangled with the vanquished, were smothered in the pressure. All at length was over. The French army was in full pursuit of the flying Flemings, and nothing was heard in the late scene of strife but the groans of the dying, and the wolfish cries of the pillagers, as they pursued their dreadful trade, scattered in small parties over the field.

As soon as the fate of the day became certain, Artaveld's page, who had been waiting at a little distance, dismounted from his courser; and the noble animal, left at liberty, sprang with instinctive terror across the plain. The page was slight and youthful in appearance; he was wholly unarmed, excepting an ornamental dagger, and even the gory weapons of the conquerors were raised above his head, to let him pass unharmed towards the field. He stepped swiftly, but tenderly, among the dying and the dead, till he reached the centre, where lay a pile of bodies, which he knew by their liveries to be the men of Ghent. Without a single shudder did the stripling draw these ghastly objects, in many instances yet quivering with life, one from above another, till he arrived at his master, whom he sought.

Artaveld was still breathing; and the boy eagerly searched for his wounds, that, in dressing them, he might by possibility stop up the avenues of ebbing life. But there was no wound on the body; and looking into his master's face, he saw that the seal of death was on the forehead. The page then threw off his bonnet, put back his hair from his eyes, and shaking his luxuriant curls till

they rolled in wreaths almost to his feet, knelt down, and pressed his lips to the cold damp lips of the dying man. The expiring lamp of life rekindled at the touch of immortal love ; and Artaveld opened his eyes.

"Ghent ! Ghent !" shouted the dying warrior ; and at the word, some broken sounds seemed to bubble up from the blood around him, for the cry was faintly echoed in several places. A Flemish loyalist, who had fallen, entangled with the vanquished, had even strength enough to rise upon his legs, as if by the power of some magic spell.

"Flanders for the Lyon !" he shouted in reply ; and, waving his empty hand, as if it brandished a lance, he fell all his length upon the slain, and gave up the ghost.

"Marie," said Artaveld, feebly endeavouring to put his arm round her waist, "your mother was right ; I die, slain by my own men of Ghent, and without a wound !"

"You, too, were a prophet, oh, Philip," replied Marie ; "for, being without an army, you are now a simple soldier again ! Let me unclasp your hand from this broken spear, and place it upon a surer, tenderer stay. There, Philip, be not afraid ; the heart that beats beneath will not break till you are no more. Your eyes grow dim ; the damps of death are on your brow ; I hear the rushing of the wings of your parting spirit ! Lean on me, love, closer—closer. Do you hear me ? It is Marie ! her lips are pressed to yours ; her arms cling fondly round your neck—Philip ! Philip !" Philip, with a last effort, drew her to his breast, a smile passed across his face, and he stirred no more.

At this instant a pillager, with his reeking knife, approached the spot, and uttered a cry of joy as he saw the rich dress of Artaveld. Marie, who had seemed to be as lifeless as her lover, no sooner felt him attempt to separate her from the body, than, like a tigress which the hunter is attempting to rob of the last of her young, she sprang upon her feet, and grappled with the ruffian. Startled and terrified, the man stumbled in his slippery path, and both fell to the ground.

"This for Artaveld !" cried Marie, striking him to the heart with

her dagger; but at the same instant the butcher's knife had pierced her side, and she had only time to throw herself once more upon her lover's body, when she expired.*

* The story of the fortunes of Philip Von Artaveld is told by Froissart with considerable animation. He does not put the reader off with his usual—"Many deeds of arms were performed, many prisoners made, and many rescues;" he narrates with something of the spirit of his predecessor Joinville, who told nothing but what he himself heard and saw; and the action, therefore, passes on with all the strength and vividness of a reality present to our eyes. It was the good fortune of Froissart to describe scenes and customs which can never be divested of certain romantic and poetical associations; and his name has, in all probability, derived some of its lustre from this circumstance; for, although a pretender to poetry, he is in reality rather a hard and dry writer. The reader will perhaps be well pleased to have, in his own words, the following passage, as a finale to the story:—

"Thus were the Flemings defeated on Mont d'Or, their pride humbled, and Philip Von Artaveld slain; and with him nine thousand men from Ghent and its dependencies (according to the report of the heralds), on the spot, not including those killed in the pursuit, which amounted to twenty-five thousand more. This battle, from the beginning to the defeat, did not last more than half an hour. The event was very honourable to all Christendom, as well as to the nobility and gentry; for had these low-bred peasants succeeded, there would have been unheard-of cruelties practised, to the destruction of all gentlemen, by the common people, who had everywhere risen in rebellion. Now, let us think of the Parisians; what they will say, when they hear the news of the defeat of the Flemings at Rosebecque, and the death of Philip Von Artaveld, their leader! They will not be much rejoiced more than several other large towns.

"When this battle was completely finished, they allowed time for the pursuers to collect together, and sounded the trumpets of retreat for each to retire to his quarters, as was proper. The vanguard halted beyond the King's battalion, where the Flemings were quartered on the Wednesday, and made themselves very comfortable; for there was sufficiency of provision in the King's army, besides the purveyances which came from Ypres. They made the ensuing night brilliant fires in different places, of the staves of the Flemings: whoever wished for any could collect sufficient to load his back.

"When the King of France arrived at his camp, where his magnificent pavilion of red silk had been pitched, and had been disarmed, his uncles and many barons of France came, as was right, to attend on him. Philip Von Artaveld then came into his mind, and he said, 'If Philip is dead, or alive, I should like to see him.' They replied, 'They would have search made for him.' It was proclaimed through the army that whoever should discover the body of

Philip Von Artaveld should receive one hundred francs. Upon this the varlets examined the dead, who were all stripped, or nearly so; and Philip, through avarice, was so strictly sought after, that he was found by a varlet who had formerly served him some time, and who knew him perfectly. He was dragged before the King's pavilion. The King looked at him for some time, as did the other lords. He was turned over and over to see if he had died of wounds, but they found none that could have caused his death. He had been squeezed in the crowd, and falling into a ditch, numbers of Ghent men fell upon him, who died in his company.

"When they had sufficiently viewed him, he was taken from thence and hanged on a tree. Such was the end of Philip Von Artaveld."—Johnes's Trans.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Fifteenth Century.

1404.—Charles possessed only the shadow of royalty, and the grandees fought for the substance. This is worthy of remark. When Hugh Capet ascended the throne, the nobles did not think it worth their while to oppose him. A prodigious change has taken place: royalty is now making gigantic strides towards tyranny, and the office of king, with or without the title, is worth applying for. The Duke of Orleans was made Lieutenant-General, much to the dissatisfaction of John, surnamed Sans-Peur, the Duke of Burgundy. On some pretext of a difference of opinion with regard to taxation, John entered Paris with an army, and the Duke left it without one. The Duke was afterwards treacherously murdered by his enemy; and a Cordelier defended the deed with the maxim, that "it is lawful to kill a tyrant." John himself, however, produced a better argument still—an army, and the Parisians, who had no particular reason to grieve for the murder, were satisfied. The young Duke of Orleans, patronized by the Count d'Armagnac and other nobles, took up arms to avenge his father's death; and even the mad King himself, having recovered his reason, such as it was, for a moment, entered the field against John.

1415.—Henry V. of England thought the opportunity too favourable to be allowed to slip; and with an invading army, weak in numbers but strong in valour, he gave battle to the French at Agincourt, and gained a glorious victory. D'Armagnac recognised the conqueror as King of France. John Sans-Peur visited Paris, where the revels consequent on the event lasted three days, at the rate of a thousand murders a day.

1419.—John had a confidential interview with his enemy the Dauphin; and the one who was assassinated was John himself.

1422.—Henry V. was nominated Regent, and married the daughter of the lunatic Charles VI. Soon after both kings died.

There were still two popes; but a Council at last terminated the dispute, and declared it to be an improper thing for any man to have duplicate keys of heaven and hell in his possession. They burned John Huss and Jerome of Prague for "searching the Scriptures." The annual parliament in France became perennial.

1424.—At the death of the two kings, the Duke of Bedford was proclaimed Regent for Henry VI., an infant; and the Dauphin, now of legitimate right Charles VII., drank wine, made love to ladies, and lost the battle of Verneuil.

His generals, being brave and foolish, plunged deeper and deeper in the mire; and at last Orleans, besieged by the enemy, was on the point of surrendering. At this epoch a young country girl called Joan d'Arc, inspired by the visions of virtuous enthusiasm, which may justly be termed supernatural, being above our common sluggish nature, appeared on the stage. She dreamed that it was her destiny to save France, and she made it so. Ridicule changed into admiration, and admiration into awe. Clothed in complete armour, and banner in hand, she led the army eighty leagues through the enemy's country, for more than half of France was in the hands of the English, and anointed King Charles at Rheims. Having finished her romantic enterprise, the charm which had guarded her life appeared to be broken. She was wounded and taken by the English, and burnt at Rouen (1431) for a sorceress. "The more generous superstition of the ancients," says Hume, "would have erected altars to this admirable heroine." True; after it had burned her.

1435.—The young King of England, in the meantime, was crowned at Paris; while Charles VII., feasting and making love, lost his kingdom with the greatest gaiety imaginable. But the national honour had been really awakened by Joan d'Arc. The Duke of Burgundy broke his alliance with the English; Paris opened its gates to its native King, and the strangers evacuated the capital. The soul of Charles VII. awoke from its long lethargy; and his character rose to meet the greatness of his destiny. The English, in fine, were driven out of France, and the King spent the remainder of his reign in restoring order in his harassed country.

In this reign the famous Pragmatic Sanction was drawn up by an assembly of the clergy. Its principal object was to curtail the privileges of the Pope.

1461.—Louis XI. carried on a long war against his nobles, and did much good to the country. He executed, it is true, forty thousand of his subjects; but he encouraged the industry of the remainder, established the post, and introduced order and impartiality into the administration of all justice but his own.

1465.—After fighting a bloody battle at Monthéri, which neither party gained, he made peace with his nobles by means of negotiation, for which he possessed a profound genius. Sometimes, however, it happened that he was overreached. One day while, in an interview, he was caressing Charles of Burgundy, the chief of his late enemies, that prince was suddenly informed that the emissaries of Louis were engaged in raising the Liégeois against him. Charles immediately took hold of his friend, and compelled him to march against the revoltors. This circumstance involved him in a series of wars and treasons.

The English again renewed their pretensions; and Louis got out of the difficulty by engaging to pay a tribute. He united Anjou to the crown by threats and treaties, and performed successfully a variety of other feats of ingenuity.

This subtle prince, who was as coldly cruel as any of the Roman emperors, was terrified at the thoughts of death in his own person. He shut himself up

in a fortress, where he passed his time in a continued agony of fear, suspicion, and superstitious horror, till he died.

1483.—Charles VIII., being only thirteen years of age at his father's death, the regency was contested by his eldest sister and the Duke of Orleans. The States, convoked at Tours, decided against the latter; and during the sitting, very extraordinary language was held by a deputy of the nobles. He inquired who it was that should decide, if not the People, who had in the first instance elected their kings, and conferred upon them whatever authority they possessed; and he explained that by the people he meant the citizens of all ranks. This must have sounded oddly. Even now, we do not know how to answer the argument implied, or to admit it. Two-thirds of the taxes of Louis XI. were taken off; although afterwards the States were far more reasonable. Charles married the heiress of Brittany, and this province was united to France.

The King then took it into his head to conquer Naples, and he did so. He visited Alexander Borgia, an eminent pope and poisoner, and held many feasts and tournaments. Returning across the Appenines, he beat, with eight thousand men, thirty thousand Italians. It is true the conquered kingdom was left behind, and already lost; but glory is everything.

1498.—Charles died of an apoplexy, and was succeeded by Louis XII. Among the beneficial changes which took place in France during this century may be reckoned the introduction of a tax to pay the soldiers, who had hitherto eaten up the people at free quarters.

Columbus discovered America, and Gama doubled the Cape of Good Hope; but in the invention of PRINTING a wider stride was made by mankind towards the greatness of civilization, than by the acquisition of new worlds. Kingdoms have fallen into decay, and populous countries have been turned into wildernesses. This will still continue to be the case; but the mind will no longer perish with the body. Knowledge will never again sink in the ruins of empires. Henceforward, when the political fabric begins to totter, undermined by cowardice and effeminacy, she will merely spread her wings and remove the seat of her high royalty to some land of the brave and free.



The Magic Wand.



Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Thy fates open their hands; let thy blood and spirit embrace them.—SHAKSPEARE,

CHAPTER I.

Am I a lord? and have I such a lady?
 Or do I dream? or have I dream'd till now?
 I do not sleep, I see, I hear, I speak,
 I smell sweet savours, and I feel soft things.
 Upon my life, I am a lord indeed!

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE was once a certain merchant, whose name was Alain de Vere, and who lived in the city of Paris. By dint of much industry and sagacity in his calling, he had amassed a considerable fortune, and was held in great esteem in the corporation to which he belonged. The time was now completely past when the bourgeois were objects of contempt to the higher classes of society, their wealth, indeed, often gave them an actual superiority over their former masters, and the lordly knights, when bargaining for their cloths and silks, particularly if they wanted credit, were fain to lower their voices into the tone of politeness and submission*.

Alain de Vere, therefore, who dealt exclusively in the more expensive articles, such as furs, in which knights themselves thought it no disgrace to speculate,† became in the course of time a man of consequence, he suffered his wife gradually to elongate her bonnet, till from a quarter of an ell it had reached three quarters in height,‡ brought up his only son in the fashionable idleness of a young noble, and began to consult the heralds on the subject of genealogy.

With the fourteenth century, however, ended the prosperity of

* The privileges of the bourgeois were numerous, and of importance enough to tempt some knights to enrol themselves as bourgeois of such a town, for the purpose of enjoying them. They thus obtained what would be called now the freedom of the town.

† Joinville.

‡ Monstrelet.

the merchant; and his new-born pride sank in the ruins of his fortune. The throne was filled by scarcely the shadow of a king, for Charles VI., sometimes a raving lunatic and sometimes a sane fool, had fallen under the entire control of his wife, Isabella of Bavaria; and, far from being able to attend to the affairs of the country, was frequently, as well as his children, deprived of almost the necessaries of life. His brother, the Duke of Orleans, was Lieutenant-General of the kingdom; but the policy of this prince, oppressive to the people in itself, was rendered still more bitter by the intrigues of rivals and enemies. The state seemed to touch on the crisis of a civil war; Paris more especially was the scene of treason and conspiracy; trade was at an end; the man who could hide himself in a steel coat laughed at his creditors; and murder and robbery stalked through the streets even at noonday.

Alain de Vere, like many of the other chief citizens, cordially hated the Duke of Orleans, and looked upon his great rival, the Duke of Burgundy, as the only man who could save the country. Salvation, however, was too long in coming to be of any use to the merchant; affairs grew worse instead of better; his whole fortune was on the backs of knights and other men-at-arms, who, in reply to his demands, told him to wait till they had made a fortune in the approaching war; and at last, Alain de Vere having waited till the last sand of patience was run, died of the delay.

So absolute was the ruin of his affairs, that the widow, afraid of taking his debts upon herself by laying claim to the moveables of the deceased, lest she should eventually be a loser by the transaction, publicly placed her girdle, with her purse and keys, upon the coffin, and desired a memorandum of her having done so to be witnessed, in token of her abandoning all claim, and freeing herself from all liability.* When the funeral was over, Mademoiselle de Vere,† with many tears, took leave of the house where

* Monstrelet.

† The title of "Madame" was only given to the wives of kings, lords, and knights. The wives of squires, and other ladies whose husbands had not attained knighthood were called "Mademoiselle." Thus when Monstrelet and other chroniclers speak of tournaments, &c., being attended by "ladies

she had worn a bonnet three-quarters of an ell high, and holding her son's arm, went out into the street.

"Alain," said she, as they walked along, "the will of God be done! My uncle, the blacksmith in the suburbs, has just offered me an asylum in his house, till the Duke of Burgundy sets us all to rights again. His wife of course is a vulgar woman—one of the *canaille*, whom it will be martyrdom to associate with; but one must bear one's trials in this unhappy world with Christian fortitude. You are now, let me whisper in your ear, nineteen. You are, indeed!—notwithstanding all your late father's customers (God pardon his soul!) refused to believe that I could have a son so old, with the exception of the odious English knight, whom, you know, we used to endure because he was the only one of our connexion who paid ready money. Well, my love, you understand that you are now able to do something for your own maintenance; and, in short, if you would live you must work. I have not an idea what profession your father intended you for, after you ran away from the University; but that does not matter, for now we cannot choose. Our cousin the baker, who keeps his oven hot even in these disastrous times—for people must still eat, if they pawn their furs for it—has been kind enough to receive you into his employment. Go my son; bake his bread, since you needs must bake, and carry it out gracefully and genteelly. I will wash your linen with my own hands; and on holidays you may still wear your slashed jacket to show your shirt, and pull your hair over your eyes like a gentleman.* Above all things, preserve your father's cane, which you now dutifully wear—at least till your fortune is made; for after that, judging by experience, it will do

and damsels," they mean to designate the rank of the fair spectators, and not, as is commonly understood, "married and unmarried ladies." Brantome calls the Seneschale of Poitou simply *Mademoiselle de Bourdeille*.

* Monstrelet. A little later than this, the historian tells us that "the men wore dresses made so as to exhibit their form, after the fashion in which people were wont to dress monkeys, which was a very indecent and impudent thing." The shoulders were stuffed and puckered to make them appear broad; "which," adds Monstrelet, "is a very vanity, and perchance displeasing to God."

more harm than good. Who knows what may turn up when the Lieutenant-General is beheaded, and a law passed compelling every one to pay his debts?"

They had by this time arrived at the blacksmith's house ; and as Alain was not invited in, his mother gave him her blessing and a gold necklace, and they parted with many tears on both sides. Alain felt sorry to deprive his mother of her necklace, which he knew would have been a great consolation to her in her misfortunes ; but considering that to her it would be only a kind of ideal consolation, while to him it might prove a solid good, he dried his eyes and put the trinket into his pocket.

By degrees, his spirits rebounded to their natural level, from which they had been somewhat depressed by the mournful ceremonies of the morning ; and walking along, indulging in the dreams of youth, he exercised himself in cutting the air smartly with the cane—the only patrimony he had inherited, which had been so warmly recommended to him by his mother. Nor indeed was this weapon of much less value than a steel one ; for, independently of its actual weight, it possessed many excellent qualities. It was a true *bâton de voyageur*, or traveller's stick, manufactured of an elder-branch ; and the hollow, where had been the pith, filled with two eyes of a wolf, three green lizards, seven leaves of vervein, and a parti-coloured stone found in the nest of the lapwing.*

Whether his amusement, being associated with the nobler ideas of war, engendered a distaste of baking, or whether his thoughts had suggested the military exercise, cannot be ascertained ; but, as he approached his destination, he did feel a growing horror of the oven. He had never as yet done anything for his own subsistence ; and was his first essay at carving out his fortune to be made in dough ? Perplexed and dissatisfied, he turned away, as he came near the quarter of the bakers, and made towards an auberge, where he heard the people at the door bawling lustily—

* The wearer of this cane might set thieves and wild beasts at defiance.--
Fucier, *Traité des Divinations*. Thiers, *Traité des Superst.*

"Wine! wine! excellent wine! Vin de Beaume! Vin d'Ai! Vin de Paumier! Fish—meat—all prices! Enter, gentlemen!"*

Alain, who naturally loved good cheer, and who had besides acquired a habit, like many other idle and neglected young men, of seeking a refuge from care in the tavern, puffing away his thick-coming fancies in one long sigh at the door, cocked his high cloth cap with a free and gallant air, and marched in.

There were seated round the wine-table more than a dozen of those nondescripts about whom the observer can predicate nothing with certainty, except that they do not belong to any trade or profession whatever. Some of them wore long cloaks like the nobility, considerably the worse for wear; and some short jackets with slashed sleeves, exhibiting a redundancy of fine but dirty linen beneath. A few had gold, or at least gold-coloured, chains round their necks, and shoes which seemed intent on rivalling the fashion of the days of good King Robert, when it was necessary to fasten their points to the knees. Their cloth bonnets were almost all upwards of a quarter of an ell in height; and their fierce and glittering eyes stared at the stranger guest through clouds of uncombed hair.

Alain saw at once that he was in the company of gentlemen, or of those who would be treated as such; and he inwardly hoped that no one there might discover in his face that he had just escaped being made a baker. He was himself one of the best dressed in the company; the marks of neglect and dissipation, thanks to his good mother's care, being less visible on his clothes than on those of the others; and he was, in truth, a stout, trim young fellow, made of thorough bone and muscle, with a ruddy cheek, an open brow, and a lightsome eye. With an air of careless familiarity, blended in no small measure with a certain good-humoured ferocity which was peculiarly affected by the aspiring bourgeois, and

* In some places the public crier was sent round to cry wine in the same way. At Cambray, a woman took it into her head to establish an opposition, by hiring the crier to cry "God is excellent! God is merciful! God is good!" &c. Alberic de Trois-Fontaine says that she was burned as a heretic!

esteemed the distinguishing mark of gentility, he swaggered up to the table.

"How now, gallants!" said he; "what of the time? How wags the world?"

"Hold, comrade!" answered one of the most ruffianlike of the party, slapping at the same time the hilt of his dagger. "In these disjointed times it behoves true men to be cautious of whom they admit into their society. I swear by my sword and my lady, that you sit not at this honourable board till you have declared yourself. For Burgundy or Orleans? Ha!"

"As for the matter of the question," said Alain, with rising colour, "it is prudent and gentlemanlike; but the manner might be mended. I would that you had asked me anything else!"

"How! What! Do you falter? Do you hesitate? Gentlemen, have we a traitor here? Speak; why would you that I had asked something else? Ha!"

"Because, comrade," said Alain, "for answer, I would have knocked you over the head with this cane for your arrogance; but seeing that you have demanded what I cannot reasonably set aside—For Burgundy, say I! and death to Orleans, and those who love him!"

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted the company; "Burgundy for ever." And they rose in a body to embrace him. Their companion, who had given the party challenge, for some moments hung haughtily back; but at length, extending his right hand—

"Youngster," said he to Alain, whose senior he might have been by about twelve months, "you treat, methinks, with too little consideration a man of honour, who has served his country. However, in these tumultuous times, one may be allowed a little latitude of expression as well as action. Come, let us embrace, and then sit down, and I will satisfy your laudable curiosity with regard to the important news which is already beginning to stir up from the bottom the population of the city."

"Let us first," said one of the guests, beneath whose cloak Alain saw with surprise the gown of a clerk of the University—"let us first drink round a solemn health to each other, and then

proceed with mutual confidence in the discussion which the entrance of this honourable person interrupted."* The health was accordingly drunk with befitting gravity ; and, leaning their heads towards each other till they almost met in the middle of the table, the party, having first explained to Alain the situation of public affairs, entered into solemn debate as to the course of action to which they were called by honour and patriotism. At this instant, if a stranger from another country had been suddenly transported into the apartment, while wholly ignorant of the condition of France, he would have seen at a glance that the nation touched upon the brink of a revolution, and recognised before him the personifications of its elements.

The news which had excited so much commotion—for already the streets were crowded, and hurrying parties were observed passing the windows of the auberge—was really important, inasmuch as it promised a speedy collision between the two factions which tore the country asunder. The first overt act of hostility on the part of the Duke of Burgundy had been his injunction to his subjects to refuse payment of a late tax imposed at Paris by the Orleans administration ; and the Duke of Orleans had retaliated by breaking off the marriages which had been finally agreed upon between the children of his rival and those of the King ; and immediately after, by refusing a supply of men and money to enable him to defend his territories against the English. On this, the Duke of Burgundy, after holding consultations with many lords, his vassals and dependents, set out for Paris, ostensibly to wait personally on the King, in order to make his complaints, but accompanied by eight hundred fighting men with concealed arms ; and the Duke of Orleans, with the King, the Queen, and the Dauphin,

* Drinking healths appears to have been looked upon on some occasions as a very serious ceremony ; and to this day the lower classes of the French touch glasses before drinking, with great formality. Mary Queen of Scots, "condamnée à l'eschaffaut, la veille de sa mort, sur la fin du repas, elle but à tous ses gens, leur commandant de la pleger. A quoi obéissant, ils se mirent à genoux, et mêlant leur larmes avec leur vin, burent à leur maitresse."—Pasquier.

had this day not less suddenly left the metropolis, with the intention of removing the court to Chartres.

Such was the news which had set all Paris astir, and it was pretty generally believed; but, as usual, a thousand contradictory rumours were afloat. Sometimes it was said that the Orleans party had not yet quitted the city, and the inhabitants were admonished to rise in insurrection, and by preventing their escape, to deliver into the hands of justice the authors of their ruin. Occasionally a member of the conclave of desperadoes assembled at the auberge of the Lion d'Or was despatched to gain intelligence; and at length their bottles, cash, credit, and patience being exhausted, and their brains heated with wine and patriotism, it was determined that they should sally forth in a body, and lend their hand to anything that might be going forward for the good of France or themselves.

Alain, who by fastening a leaden mallet to the end of his magical stick, had contrived to manufacture a weapon well known in the intestine wars of Paris, was not behindhand with any of his companions either in big words or rapid strides. He burned with the desire of distinction; and ever since the appearance of the last bottle on the table, had been ready to shed tears of indignation over the sufferings of his country. Shouting "Burgundy for ever!" and "Death to Orleans!" they rushed like maniacs along the streets, exciting tumult wherever they appeared, and gathering a mob of adherents at their heels.

At length, on reaching the Castle of the Louvre, they learnt definitively that all the royal party had already left Paris, except the Lord de Montenay, who, with his family and suite, were just preparing to follow. Furious at the disappointment, but determined to do something, however little that might be, the insurgents flew to the hotel de Montenay, and had the good fortune to find it not yet deserted. The greater part of the armed attendants had set out, and the few who remained being quite unable to withstand so headlong an assault, the place was taken at a blow, and Alain and his comrades rushed in like a company of wolves.

Alain had never before been in a nobleman's house; and, struck

with wonder and delight at the sumptuousness of the furniture, he ran through the apartments more with the air of one intent on gratifying his curiosity than on searching for the enemies of the state. As for his companions, they tucked under their mantles, with wonderful dexterity, whatever came in their way that was both rich and portable ; and at length, as, piece by piece, the valuables of the place vanished before his eyes, Alain, shocked and astonished, began to wish himself well out of the house.

To carry this wish into effect, however, was now no easy task, for he had become completely bewildered with regard to the geography of the spacious mansion ; and after groping about for some time, he at length bent his steps towards a quarter from whence some louder sounds proceeded, mingled with the interesting tones of a female voice. When he entered the room, a scene presented itself to his view, which for the time put all thoughts of self-preservation out of his head. A young lady, of ravishing beauty, was beset at the same moment by three of his unworthy companions. One was tearing the trimmings from her robe, another snatching the rings from her ears, and a third, with most unholy paw, unclasping the necklace from her throat, with a brutality uncalled for by the purposes of robbery.

"Forbear !" shouted the young citizen, in a voice of thunder ; and his loaded staff fell with such fury upon the head of one of the ruffians that his jaws and teeth rattled like castanets, as he instantly vanished. The hero of the party challenge next felt his vengeance, or rather felt it not ; for, ducking dexterously under the sweep of the staff, he darted out of the room, and plunged head foremost down the staircase. The University clerk, however, the same whose profane hand was on the lady's neck, after considering for a moment whether the gain was worth the risk of fighting, coolly drew his sword, and rolling his cloak round his left arm, advanced upon his antagonist.

Jumping, and ducking by turns, like a professional vaulter, he contrived to avoid the fatal sweep of the staff, and twice between the blows to draw blood ; and at last, when his sword was dashed out of his hand, and splintered in twenty pieces upon the opposite

wall, he sprang like a tiger upon Alain's throat. The young citizen felt that it was time to exert his energies ; and, more than all, he felt that the combat was witnessed by her whose fate depended upon the event. Her screams had sunk into a deathlike silence on the intervention of her champion ; and he knew that at this moment she was gazing with soul and sense upon the struggle, and holding her breath till her heart was like to burst.

The clerk had a decided advantage in age, strength, and experience. His dusky eye was fixed upon the eyes of his enemy ; as coolly as if the affair had been a trial of skill ; and his feet were glued as firmly to the ground as if he had grown there, part and parcel of the floor himself. On the other hand, although thus immovable in resistance, his means of offence were impeded by the cumbrousness of his outer garments, which consisted of a great wrapping cloak, besides the gown of the University. As for Alain, clothed in the tight jacket and nether garments then coming into fashion, which exhibited, with a closeness which some persons more nice than natural termed indelicacy, the outline of the figure, his movements were wholly free.

In vain the clerk drew him in by main strength, till the back of his head seemed to contemplate a salute to his heels : the elastic bones, when the strain was over, rebounded unhurt to their natural place. In vain he raised him in his arms and dashed him down again in a new position : Alain always fell firmly upon his feet, as if by an unchangeable law of gravity. The temper of the clerk at length gave way ; the dull glare of his eye brightened and seemed to emit sparks of fierceness, and he changed his ground suddenly, and attempted to trip up the heels of his enemy. The motion was enough. His foot had no sooner left the floor than the agile citizen whirled him round as if he had been a child, and threw him down upon his back with so heavy a fall that he lay stunned and motionless.

Pale, bloody, and panting with fatigue, Alain now turned his eyes upon the lady, and the two gazed at one another for some time, before speaking. Alain could not speak, if it was to have begged his life. He had never seen an earthly being at

once so lovely and so well dressed ; for all his experience had hitherto lain in the outward habiliments—the surface, as it were, of beauty. She was very young, perhaps not above seventeen, and more than commonly tall ; and without being exactly what is called full-formed, yet, gave the promise of being so, which pleases the imagination still better. The luxuriant train of her white silk gown had been thrown, in the course of the struggle, round her feet, in rich billowy clouds, whence she appeared to be rising, like some celestial apparition. Her hair, starred with jewels, hung clustering in wreaths upon her bosom, as if to veil the sanctity of a place menaced with insult and desecration ; a hood, terminating in a lofty cone, surmounted her head, and around it were festooned scarves of embroidered work, which fell wavingsly down to the ground ; her waist was confined by a broad silken band, that seemed to the imagination of the worshipper to be like some magic cestus, which imbued with glorious beauty all things, even the most common, on the person of the wearer.*

The young female, on her part, gazed at her deliverer with an expression of gratitude, strongly mingled with wonder and curiosity. He was a gentleman in dress, and in his manner and carriage there was the true nobility of nature ; for in a struggle for life and death, the awkwardnesses of society are forgotten and every man looks graceful. Being apparently somewhat under the age of knighthood, his wanting the hauberk might be easily accounted for ; but what man of rank went abroad without his sword, and flailed down his enemies with a great elder stick loaded with lead ?

The lady looked so long, that at last a blush rose into her face ; and, stepping gracefully out of her silken cloud, she approached the unknown.

“ Fair Sir,” said she, “ I pray you to pardon my slowness of speech in thanking you, which I heartily do, for the great service you have been pleased to render me, and in expressing the admiration with which I have been inspired by your chivalry. I am

* *Monstrelet.*

Rosalie, the Damsel of Montenay, and the lord my father will only regret the haste with which our journey must be commenced, from the delay it will occasion in his acknowledgments to you, and from its preventing him from receiving you with all the honour which your rank and prowess deserve. Permit me, in the meantime, to have the satisfaction of dressing the wounds which you have received for my sake." Having so spoken, courteously and discreetly, the Damsel tore a piece of fine linen from her sleeve, and applied herself to the duty of doctress, with a grace and dexterity which ladies of that age studied as an accomplishment.

Alain trembled under her hands, as if her object had been assassination. He did not open his lips; his brain whirled; he felt as if he was about to faint. At length, as he perceived her eyeing every now and then the fatal staff which lay upon the ground, a pang of shame and mortification recalled his flying senses.

"Fair Damsel," said he, with a sudden effort, "that I have been so long silent you must impute, not to the pain of my wounds, but to the sudden effect of a beauty which I may have imagined in dreams, but which I certainly never saw before realized on earth. Your noble condescension exaggerates the trifling service I have been able to render you. I have done nothing more than what any citizen—I mean, any man, were he *even* a citizen, and held no higher rank in the commune than a baker—would have been proud to have an opportunity of doing. As for the honourable lord, your father, the only adequate remuneration he can offer me is permission to escort you to Chartres, or wherever you wish to go; and I beseech you, fair Damsel, to obtain this for me!" The Damsel blushed and looked surprised, particularly, no doubt, at the episode of the baker; but she did not withdraw the hand which Alain had seized, in the vehemence of his harangue.

"Sir," said she, "the lord my father, I am well convinced, will be only too happy to enjoy the escort of so honourable a gentleman and so stout a soldier as yourself; and, in his name, therefore, I bid you welcome, and pray you to prepare for the journey by sending for your arms."

"Here are my arms!" cried Alain, determined, since he was in so far, to go on as long as his fortune would carry him—"here are my lance and my sword, my dagger and my battle-axe!"

"What! that? It seems to me to be nothing more than a staff—a cane—a mere stick!"

"To my enemies," said Alain, stoutly, "it seems to be whatever weapon they dread most. Its virtues are incalculable and incomprehensible. It is an heir-loom that has been handed down in the family from father to son, as far back as the art of heraldry can reckon. I would not part with it for all the rest of my patrimony put together." There did not seem to the Damsel to be anything exceedingly out of the way in the explanation; and she prayed her protector to descend into another apartment less confused with the marks of strife. As for the clerk, they concluded that his fall had proved mortal, since he neither stirred nor spoke; and they knew that the other ruffians had fled from the house on seeing their companion descend as if pitched downstairs like a clod.

"Alas, my poor necklace!" exclaimed Rosalie, observing, for the first time, that it was lying broken in pieces upon the floor.

"Let not that concern you," said the gallant, willing to act the great lord to the life, as well as prompted by the natural generosity of his disposition; "here is one which I happen to have in my pocket: it is less valuable, no doubt, than your own; but it may serve to supply the place for a moment, if you will vouchsafe me the honour;" and, with hands which trembled at their own audacity, he fastened his mother's chain round her neck.

"My Lord," said Rosalie, "for I judge you no less, will you think it too bold if I inquire to whom I am indebted for so many favours?"

"My name is Alain," replied he, stammering; but at the moment a lucky tumult without gave him an excuse for running to the window.

"A pretty name!" sighed the Damsel of Montenay.

The noise was caused by the return of the Lord de Montenay, who had been to see the royal effects clear of the barriers, and who

had now come to carry his daughter after the party. His fury at finding his house almost dismantled may be imagined ; and he swore that he would not leave the spot till he had examined into the whole affair. When Alain was presented to him by his daughter, as a noble stranger who had rescued her from robbery and insult, the father received him very graciously ; but his eye rested with surprise upon the staff which he held in his hand. The attendants in like manner were filled with wonder. "Good God !" said they one to another, "what a weapon for a nobleman to fight with !"

A search took place through the house for any of the rioters who might have remained behind ; when it was discovered that the corpse of the clerk had removed itself. This gave rise to a suspicion that life had not been entirely extinguished by the fall ; and soon after the body was actually found erect on its two legs, and in the act of climbing over a wall. The Provost of Paris, Sir Guillaume de Tignonville, an adherent of the Orleans party, was immediately sent for, and the prisoner delivered into his custody ; and Alain, as the only witness of the crime except the Damsel herself, was respectfully informed that it would be necessary for him to attend forthwith at the court, to give his testimony, in order that the culprit might be executed without delay.

Alain was thunderstruck at this intimation ; and he began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable with regard to the share he had himself taken in the transaction. There was no help for it, however ; the Lord de Montenay embraced him affectionately, and Alain knelt on one knee and kissed the Damsel's hand. When he rose up, their eyes met. Her glance seemed to pierce through his brain ; he felt his heart tremble ; his limbs became weak, and his sight dim. When he recovered the Damsel was gone.

The examination of the clerk was short and summary. He was found to be Olivier Bourgeois, a young man of most dissolute habits, who had several times before committed felony. Alain, stunned and confused, answered plainly whatever was asked of him ; and the prisoner, notwithstanding his claim of privilege as

belonging to the clergy, was condemned on the evidence.* He then changed his ground, and accused the witness of participation in the crime, but was only laughed at. "A nobleman attempt to rob the house of his friend!" exclaimed the Provost; "wretch! you deserve death, were it for this alone. Lead him away!"

Alain flowed out unconsciously with the crowd, and when they had reached the gibbet, inquired with a start whether he was not in the midst of a dream?

"Surely, I have drunk too much wine," said he to himself, "and am lying asleep at the Lion d'Or! O, would that this horrid scene would change, and the apparition of beauty haunt my visions again!" He was shocked, however, into a conviction of the reality of all that he saw, by a glance of immortal hate, which the clerk, turning round, fixed on his face.

"Man!" said Alain, going up to him, and laying both his hands upon his shoulders, while he looked him full in the eyes, "gaze not upon me thus! You know I only told the truth, which I could not avoid doing. I swear by the most holy Mary, who, I trust, will receive your soul, that I would not have hurt you for the world, except in a fair fight!" The baleful expression departed from the clerk's eye, and, with a grin of simple mockery, he replied—

"My Lord de Vere, you honour me too highly by condescending to explain! In return, I will tell your lordship's father, when I see him this afternoon, to what a happy market you have brought his furs. Adieu—Prince Alain!" and with perfect composure the wretch resigned himself to the executioner. The crowd speedily dispersed, for the scene at this time had not the interest of novelty for the Parisians; and Alain found himself alone beside the gibbet, with the dead body of the criminal swinging over his head.

This matter over, what was he to do next? He had spent every sol in his pocket at the auberge; and he had given away his mother's necklace, which he might have pawned for a handsome

sum. The Duke of Burgundy, he knew by the reports flying about the streets, had entered Paris, and no doubt wanted men; but Alain was no longer a Burgundian. What was it to him, he inquired, which Duke tyrannized over the country. What concern had he in the ambitious speculations of either? Taxes? Bah! No one asked him for taxes! He was of the faction of Rosalie, and, if necessary, would die the death in her cause!

Perplexed and thoughtful, he wandered moodily along the streets; and at length, in the fretfulness of his mind, began, as was his wont, to swing his magic cane around him. Forgetting on this occasion that it was loaded with lead, he was not long of hitting a passer-by such a blow as nearly took away his breath; and Alain, well knowing the probable consequences of even an unintentional assault, stepped back, and put himself on his guard. The stranger, having recovered from his astonishment, gazed for some moments upon the weapon, and then, plunging into an obscure alley, beckoned its heedless possessor to follow.

Alain, concluding, of course, that the invitation was to a gentlemanly satisfaction for the injury, and being at the moment in a mood

“To chide the thunder, if at him it roared,”

was not slow in complying; but when, at the next moment, the stranger stepped quickly and suddenly up to him, concluding that he meant to use his dagger, he grasped him by the throat and the arm at the same time, uttering an imprecation on his treachery.

“I perceive that you are already warned,” said the gentleman; “but you have nothing to fear from me, who am only too deeply implicated myself. The rage of the University seems to have been increased by the knowledge that the Duke of Burgundy, whose cause it espouses, has passed through the city in pursuit of the Orleans party. The Provost of Paris is already arrested, and it is thought his life will pay for his temerity in bringing to the scaffold one of its clerks.* You especially are the object of pursuit with the friends of the late criminal; and I marvel that, aware of your

* *Monstrelet.*

danger, as you appear to be, you should lounge thus about the streets, and even flaunt in people's eyes—not to talk of nearer contact—the celebrated staff by which you are so well known. I counsel you to proceed no farther in the way you are going, which leads perchance to your own habitation ; but to hie you to some obscurer part of the city, and remain there in hiding till the storm blows over."

"That may hardly be," replied Alain, in growing alarm ; "for, by all the Saints, I have not a sol in my pocket !"

"I am rejoiced to hear it," said the stranger, "for it will give me an opportunity of proving my devotion to you, honourable Sir, and to your friend the Lord de Montenay ;" and he placed a purse of gold in his hand.

"Adieu," he continued ; "better days will soon come round. This proud University must be humbled ; and the Duke of Orleans restored to his hereditary post near the throne, from which the traitor of Burgundy has for the moment driven him." Alain, scarcely staying to thank his benefactor, dived farther into the obscure alley, and by a passage impervious to a stranger, emerged into a line of little streets which speedily conducted him to the abode of his kinsman the blacksmith, where his mother resided.

"Heaven protect us !" cried the good lady ; "are you back so soon? How do you like the baking? Does the smell of the dough agree with you?—Ah, wretch, I see how it is! Your dress is dabbled with blood. You have been fighting, as usual ; you have beaten your cousins the bakers, and have been turned out of doors! Miserable woman that I am, to be the mother of a son who will deliver himself up to starvation rather than work for his living!" And Mademoiselle de Vere began to wipe the spots from his clothes, and weep bitterly.

"You are wrong, mamma," said Alain coolly ; "I have got through an immensity of work since I saw you. I did not go near the oven, it is true, but I went to the auberge of the Lion d'Or"—his mother groaned—"and there I drank an ocean of wine, with divers long cloaks, slashed jackets, and lofty caps."

"Ah! my family always liked to be genteel."

"And then I sallied forth to support the Duke of Burgundy, and save the country."

"That was right, Alain."

"And then I protected from insult a most beautiful young damsel, the daughter of a great lord; and I fell in love with her, and presented her with your necklace."

"Right, right! Oh, you are my own son!"

"And then I appeared as witness against the ruffian I had subdued, and had him hung."

"To be sure—nothing could be more proper!"

"But he was a clerk of the University, and I must go into hiding till the learned body are pacified."

"Alas! alas!"

"And here is a purse of gold which the saints have sent me to pay for my lodgings."

"My dear, dear Alain!" and the widow caught him round the neck, and half smothered him with kisses.

"I always knew," she said, "that you were born to be a gentleman. Shame on my tongue that but mentioned the baking business in your hearing! Come, my son, and I will lead you to a house where you will be in safety, as long as your fortune condemns you to eclipse. Oh, how lucky it was that you did not go to your cousin's!"

CHAPTER II.

Rien ne m'est plus ;

Plus ne m'est rien.

—*Epitaph on the Duke of Orleans by his Duchess.*

THE Duke of Burgundy, having held a council of his adherents at Arras, had set out in the manner related for Paris, with eight hundred men. On arriving at Louvres, in the Isle of France, he received such intelligence of his rival's movements as greatly hastened his journey; and on the day on which this narrative begins he had entered Paris. Being informed by

the inhabitants, as he passed, of the exit of the royal party, he did not draw bridle, but spurred right through the city, and overtook the Dauphin before he had entered Corbeil, where the Queen and the Duke of Orleans were waiting dinner for him.*

In vain did the attendants of the Prince expostulate—in vain was it urged that the dinner at Corbeil was ready to a single turn of the spit; with the most courtly politeness and humility the Duke wheeled the litter of the Dauphin to the right-about, and carried him and his friends back to Paris. The King of Navarre, the Dukes of Berri and Bourbon, and many other great lords, with a vast retinue of the citizens, came out to meet them; and the party was conveyed to the Louvre, amidst public rejoicings.

The first care of the Duke of Burgundy, after he had established himself in his Hotel d'Artois, was to construct round it, and in the neighbouring streets, strong fortifications of palisades and barriers; and to obtain for the Parisians, on whom he knew he could depend, that the chains in the Louvre, formerly affixed to the ends of the streets as defences, should be restored. This procured him additional popularity in Paris; and he now boldly memorialized the King on the state of the public affairs. The document is curious; but as it has nothing to do with the present narrative, it will be sufficient to mention, by way of showing the condition of the times, that, among other allegations, it set forth that the King was shut up by the faction from his servants—that petitions were granted, not only without his knowledge, but in open contempt of his commands—that he was allowed neither robes, jewels, nor plate becoming his royal state—and that when some small quantity of these things was at any time bought, it was immediately afterwards pawned! The memorial concluded, of course, with the offer of "lives and fortunes."†

Among the best arguments used by the Duke were six thousand fighting men, whom he brought into Paris and the neighbouring villages, under the command of the holy Bishop of Liege, surnamed the Pitiless; and of the Count de Cleves.

The Duke of Orleans, on his part, summoned men-at-arms from

* Monstrelet.

† Ibid.

all quarters round the devoted city ; and at last, concentrating his forces at Melun, marched direct upon Paris. His rival then, to await his coming, drew up in battle array upon the summit of Montfaulcon ; the populace of Paris rose like one man ; the sheds and other obstructions in the streets were pulled down, that the lance might have full sweep ; the roofs of the houses were covered with batteries of stones and other missiles ; the students flew to arms, and undertook the defence of the bridges ; and all men expected that that day's sun would set upon the bloodiest scene that ever was revealed at Paris.

Alain de Vere, it may be imagined, had been no unconcerned spectator of these events, or rather listener to his mother's narration of them. Mademoiselle visited him several times a day in his retreat ; and at every visit her news was more fraught with

“Guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbuss, and thunder.”

Alain was almost at his wits' end. To be cooped up in a room two ells square, when such glorious work was going forward ! What would Rosalie think of him ? Would she not imagine that he used his magic wand only to keep himself out of harm's way ? The troops of both parties were assembling, the citizens were rising in arms, the decisive blow would be struck in a day or two at farthest, and he, instead of advancing to the support of the cause he had espoused with all the means, natural and supernatural, in his power, was coolly talking over the affair with his mother !

But the University ! Alain had a dread of this powerful and implacable body by no means ill-founded. He felt a strange sensation run coldly through his blood when he thought of the gibbet scene, with the corpse swinging above his head in the wind, which but a few moments before had stood alive, and apparently merry on its legs. It was the report of the town, as retailed by his mother, that the least punishment to be inflicted on the Provost was the *amende honorable* ;* and what less than death

* This was an ignominious punishment, termed “honorable” on account of its being inflicted only on persons of high rank. The offender was led through the streets bareheaded and barefooted, with a burning 'link in his hands, to the

could he expect, who was supported by neither wealth nor influence? At last, however, he lost his fear in a natural love of action, united to an acquired love of the Damsel of Montenay; and, watching his time when the old lady was out of the way, he sallied forth.

It is not known that he encumbered himself with any particular plan or design for the employment of his time. On the contrary, he passed a good part of the morning in traversing the streets, and inspecting the preparations that were making for the defence of the city. At length, acquiring boldness as he found that no one paid any attention to him, he shouldered his staff, and walked resolutely to the hotel de Montenay. The house was garrisoned by a single servant, who at once admitted him on recognising the staff.

"Alas, my Lord!" said he, "you know not how anxiously you have been waited for. As soon as the family returned with the Dauphin, under compulsion of the traitor of Burgundy, couriers were despatched all over the city in search of you. They were commissioned to warn you of your danger from the University; to supply you, if necessary, with men and money, and to endeavour to prevail upon you to accept of an asylum here. A room was fitted up for you, communicating by a secret passage with the cellars, and the Damsel herself superintended everything in person, and would neither eat nor sleep till it was finished. At last, a report reached us, I know how, that you were seen in the thick of the crowd slashing about your stick—if it be lawful to call it a stick (Jesus preserve us!)—and the people giving way before you, like the billows of the Red Sea at the passage of the

seat of justice, or some other public place, where he confessed his offences, and begged forgiveness of the injured party.—Cotgrave. The celebrated financier Jacques Cœur, according to Monstrelet, was condemned to make the amende honorable to the King, *by the proxy of his attorney*, "bareheaded and ungirdled, having a lighted link of ten pounds weight in his hands; and he was to declare that he had falsely and disloyally," &c. The Damsel of Montaigne suffered the same ignominy, *in the person of her attorney*. The hint is submitted to the reformers of our criminal code.

Israelites. And then, an opportunity presenting itself of escaping secretly out of the city to the head-quarters of the Duke of Orleans, the lord my master, with the Damsel his daughter, mounted their horses, and having dismissed all their vassals and attendants, rode in disguise out of the gates."

"Holy Saints!" cried Alain, with a spring, "why did you not tell me this at first? What road did they take? Speak—instantly!"

"The road which leads by the gibbet," answered the man; and Alain rushed out of the house.

Lamenting the infatuation which had detained him listening to the long stories of his mother, while a happiness was laying out for him which he would have been hanged over and over again to enjoy, he rushed at full speed towards the quarter indicated. Partly through fatigue, and partly through some unpleasant sensations which began to assail his heart, he relaxed in his haste as he approached the fatal gibbet. An immense concourse of people surrounded it; another execution was in all probability going forward; and Alain, cursing the necessity he was under of passing through so public and crowded a place, drew near reluctantly.

A cross of freestone had begun to raise its head near the spot since his last visit; and as he passed it, he discovered with surprise and some dismay, by an inscription and a human figure carved upon it, that the monument was erecting in honour of his late companion, the clerk of the University, who had been hanged on his evidence.* What seemed still more strange, however, the body of the identical criminal was still swinging on the gibbet; and Alain, whose fear was mastered by curiosity, pierced through the crowd with a boldness and adroitness which nothing but the experience obtained in a great city can give.

The space in the immediate vicinity of the gibbet was filled with students of the University; and in the midst there was a knot of the doctors of that learned body, surrounding a car

* Monstrelet.

covered with black cloth. Near this stood Sir Guillaume de Tignonville, late Provost of Paris (for he had been deprived of his office), bareheaded and ungirdled. Presently, the body of the criminal was lowered down from the gibbet, and Sir Guillaume receiving it, kissed it on the mouth, and helped his sergeants to place it on the car. A number of attendants with lighted torches then closed round the car, and the procession set forth for the church of St. Mathurin, where, as Alain learnt from the spectators, the body was to be delivered by the Provost to the Rector of the University.*

Alain had seen enough; and, thankful that the interesting nature of the ceremony absorbed so completely the curiosity of the bystanders as to leave none to be exercised on him, he threaded his way through the multitude with as much gentleness as was consistent with the determination of his purpose; and at length had the satisfaction to find himself completely free. His money was spent to the last sol, or he would gladly have purchased a horse at any sacrifice; as it was, he could only walk on with all the vigour he was master of, and trust to fortune and the beneficent saints for his next meal.

He was not the only fugitive from Paris, although he was almost the only one on foot. Horseman after horseman passed him at full speed, as if riding for life and death; and at every renewal of the sound of their horses' heels upon the road, Alain's heart beat as quickly, in the half formed hope that Rosalie de Montenay and her father might have been detained by some accident at the barriers, and were now about to appear. The circuit, however, was very great, which it was necessary to take in order to join the forces of the Duke of Orleans, on their supposed march, without coming into collision with those of Burgundy; and Alain was almost dead with hunger and fatigue before half

* Monstrelet. It is Moreri, however, who mentions that the Provost was obliged to kiss the lips of the dead criminal. The body was afterwards interred honourably in the cloisters of the church, and an epitaph placed over it, as Monstrelet says, to its perpetual remembrance.

completing it. He at length arrived at an arm of the Seine, which he intended to cross, in order to shorten the way ; and threw himself down all his length upon a bench before the door of the little auberge, to wait for the ferry-boat, which at the moment was employed in landing passengers upon the opposite side. It must be observed, that from the position and tortuosity of this branch of the river, the ferry was not merely the best route for the fugitives, but the most direct way to Paris, leading to a bridge at present in the hands of the Burgundians.

While waiting here, oppressed by a feeling of despondency which was almost new to him, and gazing listlessly upon several horsemen arriving successively from Paris, apparently with the same purpose as himself, he was startled suddenly by a sound, or a sight, he knew not which, that made his heart leap within him. A cavalier, wrapped, like all the rest he had seen, in a cloak, had just dismounted and gone into the auberge, while his companion, a younger man, indeed a stripling in appearance, remained on his horse, as if unwilling to take the trouble of getting down till the arrival of the boat.

Whether the latter had spoken, and the voice had been taken cognisance of by the senses of man that have as yet received no name from science—or whether some accidental disarrangement of the stranger's cloak had awakened the suspicions of the heart, Alain did not know ; but he raised himself, first upon his elbow, and then upon his hand, and gazed on the traveller with an intensity which made his eyes ache. At this moment an officer, whom Alain recognised as a gentleman publicly known to be attached to the Burgundian faction, attended by a small body of men-at-arms, rode up to the door of the auberge, and, throwing himself from his horse, went in.

The young cavalier, on the arrival of this party, spurred on a few paces to give them room, till his horse stood close by the bench where the adventurer lay. On observing the movement of the leader, and the appearance of his satellites, he uttered a smothered cry of alarm : “ Oh, Alain ! ” he ejaculated. “ O ! unknown ! where is thy magic wand ? ” •

"Here, Rosalie!" cried Alain, springing upon his feet; "here, Damsel of Montenay! Say, what wouldst thou?" Rosalie was so overcome with terror and surprise, that if she had not leaned her hand upon the youth's shoulder, she would have fallen from her horse.

"Alain!" she said, however, recovering in an instant, "that is an usher of the King; I know him well—a changeling traitor!—he has gone in to seize my father. Save him, and I will pay the ransom!" Alain considered for a moment.

"Agreed!" said he; and he gently lifted the Damsel of Montenay from her horse, placed her on the seat from which he had risen, and leaped into the saddle himself.

"Agreed!" he repeated softly, "fear nothing; let the Lord de Montenay resign himself to his fate, and all will go well." He then waved his staff above his head, and striking his horse a lusty blow with it, rode forward at a hard gallop, and plunged into the river.

Gallantly the good steed breasted the water; and, passing the ferry-boat, then on its return, gained in due time the opposite bank. Alain landed in safety, and riding behind some bushes, near the river's edge, dismounted as if he had been a groom all his life, and with a handful of grass performed the refreshing toilet of his four-footed friend. Allowing the animal, then, to feed at pleasure, but within cover of the opposite shore, he awaited resolutely the arrival of the ferry-boat with a new freight.

The vessel, he had observed, was small, for indeed the route was very little frequented; he did not expect that more than one, or at most two guards would accompany the prisoners, and he made sure that his own abrupt manner of crossing, far from exciting alarm, would be attributed to fright, and only serve to amuse the men-at-arms. Everything happened as he expected. The ferry-boat in due time neared the bank; the Lord de Montenay standing upright and a man-at-arms of the Burgundian party, and another person behind sitting in the stern. This third passenger Alain concluded to be Rosalie; and a thrill of tumultuous joy ran through his veins, as he thought of the blessed intercourse he was soon to enjoy in quality of her protector.

It was no time to dream, however. The boat grounded on the beach ; the Lord de Montenay leaped out, and Alain, darting from his retreat, with one blow of his fatal staff, sent the man-at-arms, who was about to follow, reeling into the water.

"Fly, my Lord," he cried, "your horse waits behind the bushes ; leave the Damsel to my care !" and he stretched out his hand to assist the third passenger to land. This person accepted his service, and jumping upon the bank, threw off his cloak, and disclosed the figure of the unknown who had so kindly warned him of his danger from the University, and put it into his power to profit by the information, by lending him a purse of gold.

"Thank you, my Lord," said the gentleman, who had been a functionary of the Provost of Paris ; "one good turn deserves another !" and tightening his belt, while Alain stood staring at him in stupid astonishment, he darted into the trees and disappeared. The parting clatter of the horse's hoofs, told the adventurer that the Lord de Montenay was in full flight ; and at the same instant, the waterman, putting back in alarm, made hastily for the opposite bank.

Here was a pretty termination to the adventure ! The Lord de Montenay was on one side of the river, scampering to headquarters ; his daughter on the other, in the hands of a brutal soldiery ; and Alain, the would-be protector of both—the ex-bourgeois—the citizen-lord—standing alone upon the bank, looking foolishly from one side to the other, and, in the intervals of his shame and fury, feeling terribly hungry ! The boat did not return ; the Burgundians, observing the escape of their prisoner, had gone back to Paris the way they came ; and the waterman, even if he had been tempted by a fare, was no doubt shy of revisiting a bank where such rough reception was to be met with.

Alain for some time felt so much stunned, as to be quite incapable of reflecting upon his situation ; and when at length he in some measure recovered his faculties, and his thoughts began to arrange themselves in order, he was ready to throw himself headlong into the water, for very vexation. What fatality was this

which beset him? Was Rosalie a true damsel of the earth, or a shape clothed with unholy beauty to deceive and betray him? Ever since the moment he had set eyes upon her, he had been plunging from one misery to another. He had suffered, in imagination, all the pains of death in the office of the Provost of Paris; he had hanged a clerk of the University; he had been hunted into a room two ells square, where he had been mewed up for several days, exposed unprotected to his mother's conversation; he had swum a river, drowned a man-at-arms, and rescued a prisoner—all for the purpose, as it appeared, of being separated from his mistress, and left alone upon this unhappy bank, wearied, worn out, penniless, and as hungry as a raven!

"Oh, accursed staff!" he said aloud, apostrophising the magic wand, which he had stuck before him in the earth; "it is thou who hast destroyed me with thy sorceries! Thou wouldst make a lord of me—thou! well knowing that I was only a furrier's son, and the intended apprentice of a baker. Without thy treacherous aid, I should have sunk at once into my proper station, and have forgotten, and been forgot. I never would have fallen in love with the Damsel of Montenay—or hanged a clerk of the University—or drowned a man-at-arms. What wilt thou do for me now? Ha! Dost thou think I can dine upon thy wolf's eyes and green lizards? Away! I give thee to the Devil, by whom thou wert begotten!" and, starting up in a passion, he kicked the staff into the river.

He followed it with his eyes while it floated out into the middle of the stream, and then drifted slowly down with the current. Presently, however, it seemed to change its purpose of leaving altogether the firmer element; and, after plunging and whirling round for a moment, it suddenly darted towards the bank, where it either seized, or was seized by, some dark object.

Alain watched this strange proceeding with growing curiosity, and at length, as the idea occurred to him that something might be meant by it, in which he was himself concerned, he walked along the water's edge, till he reached the spot where the staff had seemed disposed to land. Here he found that it

was entangled in the dress of the man-at-arms whom it had drowned ; and marvelling at the singular connection of circumstances which seemed to exist, he drew both upon the dry land. The idea of searching for any booty that might be worth taking from the person of a dead enemy could not be long of occurring to any one living in these troubled times and brought up in the city of Paris ; and Alain, moved more especially by the present desperate state of his affairs, made no scruple of examining the pockets of the man-at-arms.

He found, unfortunately, neither gold nor food ; a few papers being the only personal property of the dead man. Discouraged by this result of his inquiries, he was about to move despondingly away ; but first opening the papers, with a kind of languid curiosity, he threw his eyes over their contents. They proved to be despatches to the Duke of Burgundy, apparently entrusted to the bearer by some messenger whose horse had foundered. They announced the defection of several partizans of importance from the Orleans party, and detailed a plan for the total destruction of its army, provided the full and hearty concurrence and assistance of the citizens of Paris could be obtained.

Alain trembled with emotion as he read. The observations he had made that day convinced him that no obstruction to the plan would be offered by the Parisians, but on the contrary, that everything would go precisely as the writer anticipated. Ejaculating a hasty prayer for the soul of the deceased, he again seized his magic stick, and, with absolute confidence in its supernatural assistance,* took the way towards the quarter, between Melun and Paris, where he expected to find the Duke of Orleans.

* Superstition was so universal in France at this time, that in the oration pronounced before the Dauphin and the Court, in justification of the Duke of Burgundy, by Master John Petit, professor of theology in the University of Paris, one of the principal charges made against the Duke of Orleans was for having conspired against the life of the King by sorcery, charms, and witchcraft. His agents, according to the learned professor, took up their abode in the lonely tower of Mont-Jay, near Laigny-sur-Marne ; and their principal, an apostate monk, performed there numerous invocations to the devil. At length,

A few minutes before, it would have been a difficult matter to persuade him that he had strength enough to crawl so far ; but, supported by the superstitious conviction alluded to, and buoyed up with the indefinite hopes of a young and ambitious mind, he pushed manfully forward, till he actually saw the heights in the distance surmounted by flags and tents, and glittering with arms. The Duke of Orleans had halted his forces near the high road, and was in the act of holding a council of war, to determine on the order of the march upon Paris.

Invigorated by the sight, Alain sprang forward with renewed energy, and at length reached the lines. He inquired for the Lord de Montenay ; but that chief was attending the council.

"No matter," said Alain ; "I must see him, were he in the bowels of the earth. Lead me before the Duke."

"Why, how now !" exclaimed a surly man-at-arms, "who have we here, I wonder ? You must wait the Duke's leisure, skipjack ; and that will be ere the beard is well grown on your chin !"

"Stand back, for I will see the council. I have an errand that must be sped, and that instantly."

"We shall see that. Down with your staff, or, by the Mass ! I will pin you to this tree with my sword !"

"Take care," said Alain solemnly, "that it does not down upon

on a Sunday, one grand invocation was made, on a mountain near the tower ; and the priest of darkness, stripping himself naked to the shirt, kneeled down. He stuck the points of a sword and dagger, belonging to the Duke of Orleans, into the ground, and near them laid the Duke's ring. Whereupon two demons appeared to him, in human shape, and clothed in a brownish green, one of whom was called Hermius, and the other Estramain ; and the monk paid them the same honour and worship which is due to Our Lord. The demons then, seizing the weapons and the ring, vanished ; but the monk soon after found the sword and dagger lying flat upon the ground, the point of the former being broken off, and laid in the midst of some powder. In half an hour the second demon reappeared with the ring, which was now of a red colour ; and presenting it to the monk, said to him, "Thou wilt put it into the mouth of a dead man, in the manner thou knowest," and then vanished. The whole oration, which is highly curious throughout, is embodied by Monstrelet in his *Chroniques*.

your helmet ; or you will grow to its point, like a pennon to a lance's head ! Go, tell the Lord de Montenay that I am here."

"You here? Why, who are you, in the devil's name?"

"The Knight of the Magic Wand!" answered Alain. The man-at-arms stared ; and a number of soldiers, who had gathered round to hear the altercation, repeated the style in surprise to one another—"The Knight of the Magic Wand!" Whatever might have been their ideas of the bearer of such a title, no farther obstruction was offered to his progress towards the Duke's tent. The word ran before him all the way—"The Magic Wand! The Magic Wand!" and officers and men came running in crowds to look at him. By and by, he was recognised as the hero of Lord Montenay's story by some of that nobleman's friends, to whom he had related the circumstances attending the robbery of his house, and his own escape that day from the Burgundians ; and with every demonstration of respect, mingled with astonishment, he was at length ushered into the presence of the council.

The Lord de Montenay embraced him warmly, and was about to present him with great formality to the Duke, although inwardly wondering at the caprice which had made his mysterious friend select so odd a time for the introduction.

"Hold, my good Lord," interrupted Alain ; "time presses. I came not hither for the sake of ceremony, but to save you all from destruction. Your friends, Duke of Orleans, on whom you depended for support in the storming of Paris, have deserted the cause ; and the citizens are prepared to second the Duke of Burgundy in such a manner as to place the event of the struggle beyond all doubt. These documents will prove the truth of what I say ; and from my own personal observation I can describe the plans of the Parisians. Now, give me to eat, for I am hungry !" The consternation of the council at this intelligence may be imagined ; and when a personal perusal of the documents had completely satisfied them of the fidelity of the informer, he was overwhelmed with questions, to all of which, however, he answered not a word but, "Give me to eat, I say, for I am hungry !"

The Duke at length ordered food to be set before him and

while he ate, the lords stood round the table, eyeing alternately him and his staff, and greatly marvelling at the voracity with which he devoured and the quantity he consumed. Having in this manner laid in provision for at least three days—for Alain knew by experience the uncertainty of war, and had inly sworn never again to omit an opportunity of eating his fill—he rose up, and, in answer to the Duke's question, described with much graphic power the situation of Paris, displaying in the course of his narrative a quickness of thought, and an acuteness and intelligence of remark which excited the admiration of the bystanders.

It was impossible to hold out against a demonstration so perfect of the extreme hazard, not to say entire destruction, which would attend a prosecution of the enterprise. The Duke, therefore, promptly issued orders for the army to break up their encampments, and march back to Corbeil; and the Queen retired in all haste to the Bois de Vincennes.*

"And now, Sir Knight of the Magic Wand," said the Prince, "and, in faith, it seems to be a wand more pleasant to look at than to feel—I would pray you to tell me who has the honour of being your father in chivalry?"

"The wand itself, my Lord," said Alain, smiling; "or, rather, the spirit which informs it."

"And is that spirit holy or unholy?"

"Judge it, my Lord, by its fruits!"

"Holy, then, say I!" exclaimed the Duke. "But, nevertheless, in order to prevent any vain interpretation of malicious men, it is necessary that it should be associated with, or rather controlled in the paternal office by a Christian knight and prince!" and he struck the youth three blows on the shoulder with the flat of his sword.

"In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George," continued

* Monstrelet says, that this unexpected step, which probably saved Paris from what might have been one of the darkest days in its history, was adopted from information received by the Duke of the state of the city, and the disinclination of the inhabitants to his cause.

the Duke, "I make thee knight : Be worthy, brave, and loyal !"* He then presented him with a complete suit of offensive and defensive armour ; and Sir Alain, bewildered with joy and astonishment, retired with the Lord de Montenay to his quarters.

"And now, of my daughter," said the Lord de Montenay ; "why is she not with you ? Where have you bestowed her ?" Sir Alain started, coloured, and looked confused.

"Why, what is this ? Holy Mary !" cried the father ; "what has happened to my child ?"

"Nothing, I trust," replied the new-made knight ; "nothing ; but, in truth, I have not seen the Damsel."

"Not seen—Sir, Sir ! Beware of what you say ! Your heart, I know, is yet dancing, and your brain whirling, since your new honours ; but trifle not with me, if you love your life. I left my daughter this morning in the midst of enemies, in reliance upon your faith as a gentleman, since you promised to protect her. I now demand her at your hands."

"In truth, I have not seen the Damsel," said Sir Alain. "The boat pushed off the instant you mounted horse, and did not return. I had no means of crossing the river, and—and—"

"Traitor !" exclaimed the Lord de Montenay furiously, "you had no means of crossing the river at a public ferry ? But this

* Great disorders were by this time admitted into chivalry. It mattered little whether the aspirant had attained the proper age of twenty-one or not ; and we have even an instance of a baby being knighted at the font. This was the infant son of Philip Duke of Burgundy. The continuers of Monstrelet record the circumstance without comment. "The Duchess of Burgundy gave birth to a son at Dijon, who was knighted at the font. His godfathers were Charles Count de Nevers, who gave him his own name, and the Lord de Croy. He was also made a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and, in addition, the Duke his father gave him the county of Charolois." It is curious to notice that the career of this child, when he grew up, was one continued course of trouble, shame, crime, disaster, and defeat. He was killed before Nancy, in 1476. The following epitaph on him is preserved by Heuterus, the historian of the Netherlands :—

"Te pacis piguit, te tædium atque quietis,
Carole, sicque jaces ? jamque quiesce tibi."

lame apology shall serve you in no stead. In spite of your magic staff, if it be one, and the prince of magic, whom you serve, I will require a bloody atonement for the wrong I suspect. Come with me into the presence of the Duke ; to him I refer my cause—nay, no hesitation. What, ho ! without there ! Seize the villain, and drag him before the Prince !” While the men-at-arms, who had all dismounted, and the varlets came running towards the entrance of the tent, Alain, springing out, leaped upon his steed.

“ My Lord,” he said, “ to seek the Prince would be but wasting time ; for he can take no cognisance of this matter. On another occasion I will return you the names you have favoured me with. In the meantime I go to find the Damsel of Montenay, if she is above ground ; and if she is below it, to lay myself down in her grave !” And so saying, he dashed his maiden spurs into the horse’s flanks, and was out of sight in an instant.

In due time he had reached the ferry. He swam the river as before ; and, with a heart bursting with fearful expectation, went into the auberge. The people of the house had not seen the young cavalier for whom he inquired ; he might have been there, or he might not ; the multitude of fugitives and pursuers had been so great all day, that it was impossible for them to have taken particular notice of an individual. No disturbance, however, as far as they could observe, had taken place ; no one had been arrested in or near their house ; certain men-at-arms, on perceiving the escape of a prisoner on the opposite side, whom they styled the Lord de Montenay, and the fall of his guard, had returned to Paris by the way they came ; and subsequently many persons, both in parties and alone, had crossed in the ferry-boat.

This was all he could learn. That Rosalie had passed the river was highly improbable, for the plain reason that she had not reached the camp, to which the distance was inconsiderable. When once across, she would have been shown the way to her destination by her fellow-fugitives ; and even if her sex had been discovered, the simple disclosure of her name would have been a protection from insult. The natural conclusion, therefore, was, that she had returned to Paris ; and Alain almost hoped that he should find her

in safety in her father's house. The idea, notwithstanding, of the dangers which a young and unprotected female would have had to encounter at that lawless period, and in the seat of civil war, recurring every now and then, made his blood run cold ; and it was with alternate paleness and flushings of the cheek, in the transports of hope or agonies of fear, that he pursued his journey.

It was near the close of this busy day when he re-entered the city. Everything still wore an air of bustle and confusion. Chains were fixed from side to side of the streets, and sentries stationed to examine the appearance of the passers-by. Crowds were seen running to and fro, as at noon-day, and moving figures flitted on the tops of the houses like shadows passing across the dull sky behind. Some torches, here and there, threw a ruddy glare upon the fierce and eager faces around, and were reflected in the polished armour of the knights intermixed with the populace.

Notwithstanding, however, that all things proclaimed the presence of some strange convulsion in the moral and political state of the city, some sights and sounds were heard or seen, telling of the common business of the hour. In the streets set apart for such trades as deal in the articles which nature or luxury has made 'necessaries of life, many shops were open ;* and criers stood by the door, pointing out to the passengers the goods, to which there was nothing else in the shape of sign or other display, to attract their attention. Sometimes the startling sound of a rattle was heard, and a clerk would pass slowly along, announcing, in a doleful voice, the decease of a citizen, with the words, "Awake and pray for the dead !" The tolling of the bell, too, was heard at intervals, which declared the approach of the fatal moment to some individual of the countless multitudes who garrisoned the city of war ; and the priest, passing hastily along to administer the Sacrament to the dying, was joined by a tumultuous crowd, who threw themselves on their knees on the stairs, in the court, and even around the death-bed, to repeat the prayers which on such occasions purchased indulgences from Heaven.

* Each trade had its separate street.

The habitually observant eye of the young knight rested for a moment, not without interest, upon the various incongruities of the scene ; but disturbed and harassed by his own uneasy thoughts, he passed as speedily as possible through the crowd. He was himself altogether unknown ; for in his new garb of chivalry, glittering from head to foot in polished steel, even the celebrated staff which he still carried side by side with his lance, would have failed to awaken remembrance. A careless and undaunted carriage, and the party word of "Burgundy !" as easy to the tongue as any other, were sufficient to get him past chains and sentries ; and in a very short time he had reached the hôtel de Montenay.

With a trembling hand he knocked for admittance ; and the same servant he had before seen, with slow and timid steps, approached the door, and recognising, his voice, let him in. Rosalie had not been there. The man had not heard a syllable concerning either his master or the Damsel ; and Alain, after standing for some time mute and motionless, gazing with a stare of horror into the speaker's face, turned suddenly round, and, leaping upon his horse, rode away.

On arriving within a few doors of the house of his grand-uncle, the blacksmith, he dismounted, not caring to attract the observation of the neighbours. His mother heard his voice, although it was now so dark that she could not see his person, and ran to the door.

"Ah, wretch !" she exclaimed, half-crying, half-laughing, "do you think I have a heart that can stand this ? How durst you leave your lodgings this morning without my knowledge ? Did the University lay hold of you ? Has the Provost been hanged ? What have you been doing all day ?—lounging about the streets ? Ah, idler, you will never have it in your power to be ruined like your father !"

"You are wrong this time too, mother," said Alain, but in a graver voice than usual ; "I have been exceedingly busy since I saw you."

"What have you been doing ?—hanging somebody else ? Not another clergyman, I pray Heaven !"

"No mother ; I drowned an individual—a man-at-arms."

"Oh, only a man-at-arms?"

"And then I rescued a great lord from captivity."

"Good—good ; excellent ! I said you would turn out a clever boy !"

"And then I prevented a battle, and perhaps effected a peace between the two princes."

"Admirable ! admirable !"

"And then I was knighted by the Duke of Orleans." The mother screamed with joy.

"Embrace me, mother," continued Alain, opening his arms ; "I know that the touch of your son's hauberk will gladden your heart."

"And that it does," said Mademoiselle de Vere, sobbing hysterically ; "that it does, Sir Alain—that it does, my Lord Knight !"

"And now, I have to add, that all this good fortune is bitterness to Alain ; for I have lost my mistress—my Rosalie !"

"Never mind that, my dear Sir Alain—never mind that ; you will soon get another, I'll warrant you, now that you are a Lord Knight !"

CHAPTER III.

This rough magic
I here abjure : and when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do),
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for—I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE change which almost immediately took place in the aspect of affairs was truly magical. The grantees on both sides, suddenly struck with the magnitude of the danger which the kingdom had for a moment escaped, held a solemn meeting at Paris, which lasted for several days ; when it was finally deter-

mined that within eight-and-forty hours the Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy should be compelled to submit their disputes to the arbitration of the Kings of Sicily and Navarre, and the Dukes of Berry and Bourbon. The rival princes yielded ; their contentions were amicably settled ; and they mutually promised love and friendship during their lives.* The armed bands drew off from around the city which they had threatened with destruction ; civil order was restored ; and the Parisians, laying by their swords and clubs under their counters, to wait for a new disturbance, returned to their customary business.

Alain had no business to return to. He was a knight, without funds to maintain himself, and without a master to look to for support. The Duke of Orleans, although by this time he had returned to his hôtel of St. Anthony, near the Bastille, took no further notice of him. He had repaid his services with three strokes of his sword ; and Alain and his magic wand were soon forgotten by everybody but the Lord de Montenay. This nobleman pursued him with a fierceness which increased every day ; and the new knight retired from his vengeance with a caution which the other set down both to cowardice and remorse.

Alain, in the meantime, lived like many other knights adventurers both of these times and ours—upon the credit of his horse ; till at length, as the debt increased, the value of the animal rose with it so high, in the opinion of his landlord, that he would not suffer him to be taken out of the stable at all. This sort of caution was of great benefit to the four-footed party ; for as yet he had never, on any occasion, returned from taking the air without being covered with mud and foam. Alain had occupied himself, day and night, in riding the country in search of his mistress ; and, now that his range was encircumscribed, he instituted a search as minute and laborious, into every quarter of Paris.

In the meantime, the disappearance of the Damsel of Montenay became the public topic of the Court and the town. The Duke of Orleans alone seemed to talk slightly of so grievous an accident

occurring to one of his best officers ; and when the lord, her father, applied to him for assistance, he merely replied, that if he could point out any specific wrong, and bring it home to any particular individual, not only his influence, but the whole power of the State, would be exerted to redress or avenge it. This answer appeared reasonable, and even friendly, to most men ; but a father, in the situation of the Lord de Montenay, does not argue very coolly, and he complained so loudly and bitterly of injustice, that the Duke, in the present critical posture of his affairs, could no longer withhold from taking public notice of the affair.

The complaint of the Lord de Montenay, which comprehended a full statement of all the circumstances, was fully heard ; and as he could produce no legal evidence against Sir Alain, his demand of battle against him was at length allowed. A day was appointed for the judicial combat to take place, in the presence of the Dauphin and the Court ; and preparations were made for the imposing solemnity on a scale the best calculated to draw the people's attention from the affairs of public polity, on which their curiosity might be more indiscreetly and mischievously exercised.

Sir Alain, again elevated into a public character, found no want of friends in this emergency. Being without kinsmen, or other natural supporters, he was looked upon, in the high and generous spirit of chivalry, as a noble stranger at the court of his prince ; and every assistance which his situation required was lavishly afforded him. He was furnished with arms, horses, and attendants by the Duke of Orleans himself ; and when the appointed day arrived, he rode into the lists followed by some of the first nobility of the kingdom.

The place of combat was the square behind St. Martin des Champs, and strong lists of wood had been erected, with a pavilion at either end for the duellists, and scaffolds for the spectators. The Dauphin presided in person, surrounded by the principal *grande*s of the kingdom ; among whom were placed many dames and damsels of the Court and city. Not the least interesting personages of the multitude were the public executioner and his myr-

midons, who attended in their official capacity, for the purpose of striking off the head of the vanquished knight.

When Montjoye King-at-Arms had recited the challenge and its causes, the appellant rode into the lists. He wore over his armour a vermillion-coloured mantle embroidered with a white cross, the usual badge of the French ; and was mounted on a courser covered with housings of his arms,* made of velvet furred with ermine, and loaded with tassels of gold.† The reins of his horse were held by two nobles, and two others followed, one carrying his lance and one his battle-axe. Behind were six pages mounted on war-horses, the two first of which were covered with furniture of ermine, and the other four with cloth of gold ; and the procession was closed by many knights and esquires of the household of the Duke of Orleans.‡

In this state the Lord de Montenay paraded round the area, and having made his obeisance to the Dauphin, his pages retired, and he himself, with his attendants, withdrew a little to the left of the lists.

Immediately after, Sir Alain de Vere, accompanied in like manner by four gentlemen, but unattended by pages, made his appearance ; and riding round, made his obeisance to the Prince. Eight men-at-arms were then stationed within the lists, to preserve the rules of the duel between the principals ; and the heralds made proclamation, that all other persons were to withdraw from the area, and that no obstruction was to be offered to the combatants, on pain of death. A terrible pause ensued. The knights had taken their station ; and the last proclamation of the herald was waited for with intense anxiety. At last it came ; a single blast of the pursuivant's trumpet shook the air ; the knights were commanded to do their duty, and they swept towards each other like the wind. They met with a crash ; their lances flew up in splinters ; and the combatants finished the career erect in their saddles.

Till this moment, the odds, in the opinion of the spectators, had

* Monstrelet.

† Comines.

‡ Monstrelet.

been greatly against Sir Alain. His extreme youthfulness of appearance, and the fact of his never having been seen in the lists before, were disadvantageously compared with the ripe age and veteran reputation of the Lord de Montenay. The course, however, which had just been performed was as gallant and knightly a deed of arms as had ever been witnessed, and many were struck with pity as the idea occurred to them, that one or other of these brave men was doomed to lose his life, either by the stroke of his enemy, or by the headsman.

The knights now dismounted; and, according to the terms of the challenge, new lances and their battle-axes were delivered to them. The Lord de Montenay advanced, like an enraged tiger, brandishing his lance in one hand, and gripping with the other his battle-axe by the middle, with the edge towards his enemy. Without waiting for his approach, he darted the lance at Sir Alain, with such force that, singing past his ear, it stuck and quivered in the earth behind him; and immediately after, hurling his battle-axe with still surer aim, sparks of fire were seen to fly from his adversary's helmet. Sir Alain, on his part, struck the Lord de Montenay on the breast with both lance and battle-axe, but so feebly that an involuntary cry of surprise arose from the spectators. It seemed as if the blows had been directed by the eye of a man, and executed by the hand of a lady.

They both caught up their battle-axes, however, at the same instant; and having closed foot to foot, a furious and somewhat singular encounter took place. The appellant acted entirely on the offensive, as if careless of being struck in return; while the defendant seemed to have no other wish than to ward off the blows of his enemy. Either through ignorance, as it was at first supposed, or a want of soldierlike activity, he missed every one of the opportunities so lavishly afforded him of striking in return; and at length, as a suspicion sprang up among some of his cowardice, and among others of his guilt, a smothered cry of contempt and indignation, mingled with exclamations of wonder at the manifest interposition of Providence, arose from the spectators.

“Never, till you have granted me the boon I require !”

“Then here I kneel by your side, in the presence of the unseen but all-seeing God, and declare, by my honour as a knight and my faith as a Christian, that I have already told you all I know ! Since the moment when I parted from you at the camp, my exertions to trace the ill-fated Damsel have been unremitting ; and it is known to Him who now witnesses my oath, that I would give the dearest blood in my veins to save from destruction one hair of her beautiful and beloved head. My Lord, there can now be no presumption in confessing it—but I love your daughter with a passion which shall follow her beyond the grave !”

The Lord de Montenay gazed in wonder upon the speaker ; but he could not doubt for more than an instant the proofs of his integrity, which he read in his proud and manly brow, and fine bright eyes, glistening through tears, as they were raised towards the Heaven he invoked. He embraced him with joy and affection ; and the two knights, who in the morning had thought it a very hard case to be prevented from battering one another to pieces with battle-axes, after a long and confidential conversation, parted warm and faithful friends.

The next morning, after Alain had disposed of his old horse and armour, paid his debts, divided the balance with his mother, and was just preparing to go to the Hôtel de Montenay, to ask the advice of his new friend about his own affairs—for the conversation had been engrossed by a single subject the night before—he received a message to attend the Duke of Orleans. He was somewhat surprised by the circumstance, feeling conscious that his appearance in the lists could not have greatly served his military reputation ; but, at all events, he thought it his duty and interest to obey the command with as much appearance of zeal as possible, and he set forth, therefore, without delay, for the hotel of St. Anthony. The Duke was alone when he was ushered into his presence.

“Sir Knight,” said the great man, with much apparent kindness of manner, “it is not my fault that this interview has been deferred so long. The State owes you much ; and I, as the chief administrator

of its affairs, am answerable for the debt. Even now, however, it is not in my power to do all that I could wish, but a beginning at least shall be made. The charge which the Lord de Montenay has brought against you, I know to be wholly unfounded ; and even were it otherwise, I should not very readily acquiesce in a man of mine, or one whom I hope to make so, losing his head for a frolic. At any rate, a feud with so powerful a lord cannot but be disadvantageous to the fortunes of any young and unsupported adventurer ; and I have determined to employ you on a mission which will remove you for a few days from Paris, and by your conduct in which I shall be able to determine in how far your more important services may be made use of with advantage to the State. Depart for the Bois de Vincennes, in an hour at farthest ; and, when you arrive there, present this letter to the Governor of the château, from whom you will take your farther instructions."

Alain's first impulse was to make the Duke aware of the extinction of his feud with the Lord de Montenay ; but this was overruled by the suggestions of instinctive policy. The plan of his patron was adopted with reference to an imaginary danger, to which his protégé was exposed by residing in Paris ; and he would not, by withdrawing the motive, run any risk of losing the appointment altogether. This, it must be confessed, was well reasoned for a beginner ; and Alain, pluming himself on his discretion, after he had discharged a volley of thanks and compliments at the Duke, retired to make ready for his journey, and to dream of being one day minister of state.

His mother took leave of him with tears of joy, entreating him on no account to leave behind the magic staff, to which, under Heaven, was due the whole series of his good luck ; and the Lord de Montenay, although less sanguine in his expectations with regard to the result of this seemingly secret expedition, was equally kind and urgent in advice.

"Adieu," he concluded ; "keep up your spirits, whatever may befall you ; rate not your prospects too high, for, be assured, you are unfit for the *private* service of the Duke of Orleans. Forge not poor Rosalie, or the search to which we have both devoted

ourselves ; and remember, that in any case of need, you will find me your friend to the very edge and boundaries of my poor ability."

When Sir Alain arrived at the Château de Vincennes, it was nearly dark. Having mentioned the personage from whom he had come, refusing to deliver the letter to any one except the Governor in person, he was ushered upstairs towards a private chamber, where he was told he would find him. Owing probably to his ignorance of etiquette, instead of waiting to go through the forms of admission according to the pleasure of his conductor, the adventurer, on arriving at the door, opened it at once, and marched boldly in.

A lady, apparently approaching towards middle life, was standing at one of the windows, in close conversation with a stout, coarse, ill-favoured man considerably advanced in years. The latter turned round in angry surprise, at the abrupt entrance of a stranger ; and the former, drawing up haughtily, fixed upon him a pair of still brilliant eyes, which darted daggers of pride and fierceness. Alain stopped in confusion, but returned the gaze with a look of undisguised curiosity. A hundred struggling recollections shot dark and formless through his brain ; he was sure that he had seen the face before, and he felt that it was associated with ideas of grandeur and magnificence. At length, as the truth suddenly flashed upon him, by a kind of instinctive impulse, his head sank upon his breast and his knee touched the floor, for he knew that he was in the presence of the Queen of France.

Isabella, without replying in the slightest manner to his homage, continued her haughty inspection, as if he had been some strange animal, of a low and disgusting species, that had dared to crawl into her presence ; but the Governor of the château, for such was his degree, strode up to Sir Alain, and in a harsh and rude voice inquired who he was and what he wanted.

"Sir," replied the knight, "if you are the Governor of the Château de Vincennes, I have a confidential letter to you from the Duke of Orleans. I understood that it was your pleasure to

see me in this room, or I certainly would not have taken the trouble to mount the stairs."

The Governor took the letter from his hand, without reply, and opened it. It appeared to contain not more than two or three lines; but his eye remained fixed for a considerable time upon the paper, while an expression of deep vexation rendered his countenance still sourer than nature had made it. At length, turning round, he made a respectful obeisance to the Queen.

"Madam," said he formally, but with a species of intelligence in his look which did not escape the quick observation of the knight, "this letter, from my very dear and noble Lord of Orleans, discourses of affairs of state, which would have little interest for a lady's ear. Will it please you to excuse for a few moments my attendance upon your honourable person, that I may despatch the necessary answer?"

"Nay, my good Lord, replied Isabella, "it is I, I think, who attend upon you, for this is your private chamber of business; I shall interrupt you no more, however, this night, for I am going straight to bed;" and with a sweeping inclination, a part of which might have been appropriated or not at his pleasure by the knight, she glided out of the room.

When she had disappeared, the manner of the Governor instantaneously altered into an appearance of frank and jovial good humour, and he seized the adventurer by the hand.

"We can now," said he, "throw the fetters of state ceremony aside, and speak like free knights. You are perhaps not altogether aware that our gracious lady the Queen is wholly ignorant of the matter in hand between us, and that she must remain so. If the Duke were to know that she even suspected it through our fault, I would not give a sol apiece for our lives! As for your share in the transaction, it is plain and simple. You this night escort a prisoner to the Château of Limoisin. From your being selected for the service, I am to conclude that you have neither a faint heart nor a weak hand; for, in these unsettled times, you may meet, although less frequently, with rovers of the night as well as

of the day : and I am farther to conclude that you are wholly devoted to our noble master, and dependent, like other good knights, upon his support for your rise in the world, and this it is which makes me so free and open with a stranger."

Alain was greatly at a loss to know in what the openness of the Governor consisted ; but he was firmly determined to avoid all appearance of impatience or curiosity, and to pursue to the end whatever might be entrusted to him, with soldierlike coolness and resolution.

At the same time a decided dislike to the business before him began to creep over his mind. He remembered the expression of the Lord de Montenay, " Be assured, you are unfit for the *private* service of the Duke of Orleans." That this was private business there could be no rational doubt ; it was indeed so private, that even the agent was to be excluded from the secret. In the public service the Duke could have no want of officers, and a young and untried man like himself would have no chance of being thought of. Still he comforted himself with the idea that his employer never could have had the folly to choose *him* for a business in which there was anything disagreeable to the feelings of a man of honour ; for, even in the presence of the Duke of Orleans, he was sensible that his manner had exhibited rather abruptness and independence, than the reverse.

Immersed in these meditations, he had descended the stairs midway to the supper-room, where the Governor was to join him presently ; but bethinking himself that his host had not seemed to advert to the necessity of his having a fresh horse for the expedition, he returned to remind him of the circumstance, that no time might be lost. Bewildered by the number of passages leading from the landing-place, and at any rate in some confusion and perplexity of mind, he hardly knew which was the right one, but proceeded almost at random. He had not gone far when he became convinced that he had made a mistake ; but hearing voices from a chamber at a little distance, he approached the door to inquire his way.

His entrance was not observed by the persons in the room,

who were concealed from him by a screen, and engaged in a low but apparently fierce altercation. What was his astonishment to find, the next moment, as they raised their voices, that for the second time that night he had plunged suddenly upon the privacy of the Queen of France and the Governor of the Château de Vincennes ! Alain hung back in shame and vexation, uncertain whether he ought to advance boldly or steal out of the way ; but just as he had determined on the latter and more prudent plan, he stopped involuntarily, as the Queen alluded, in a direct and terrible manner, to his own expedition.

"I tell you," said she, in a voice choked with suppressed passion, "that the prisoner shall not reach Limoisin this night alive : on that I am resolved !"

"Then, Madam," replied the Governor, "you are resolved that my head shall grin to-morrow from the point of a lance planted on my own turrets ?"

"Of what are you afraid ? Cannot you keep your own counsel ? Who knows, or will know, that you had any hand in the matter ? On this rash and thoughtless boy, whom the shallow Duke has entrusted with the business, shall fall the whole blame ; and even he, if he be fool enough, which I think he will, to resist the attack, may chance, for aught you or I know, to be silenced for his temerity."

"I would to God, Madam, since you are resolved, that you had managed this business yourself. I do not see, in the way you have arranged it, what view you could have had in drawing me in as a party at all."

"Sir, you cannot be dispensed with. You must, in the first place, compose the escort of the most cowardly and inexperienced men you have ; and, in the second place, you must ply this young knight, before he departs, with wine enough to unsettle any little brains he may possess. As those of my own confidential followers whom I have destined to perform the service, cannot otherwise reach the proper place in time, it shall be my care that pebbles are thrust into the hoofs of the escort horses to lame them."

Alain had heard enough. More noiselessly than a cat, he

glided out of the apartment, and descended to the supper-room. Here the Governor soon after found him, apparently half asleep, and they sat down to table. The guest speedily recovered from his lassitude; spoke quick and gaily, drank freely—what he did not throw under the table; toasted the Queen; more than hinted at the adulterous connexion which was supposed to exist between her and the Duke of Orleans; and, before the meal was well over, began to stare, speak thick, and quarrel. At last, as the Governor still endeavoured to detain him, he started from his chair, and swore a tremendous oath that he would wait no longer for all the governors in Christendom. He boasted of his own consequence and intimacy with the Duke, and called the servants to witness that he was travelling on that Prince's business, and that if anything went wrong it was the fault of those who retarded his journey to an unseasonable time of the night. In short, he acted the drunken man to such perfection, that the Governor was exceedingly happy to get him out of the house, being only afraid that he would never reach the important point of his journey before daylight.

The prisoner appeared to be wounded, for he was carried in a litter swung between two horses, one behind and one before, and steadied by a man riding at each side. The horses were all lame, and the men, generally speaking, a set of scarecrows who seemed afraid to look about them into the night. As soon as they had gained a sufficient distance from the château, Alain commanded a halt; and, dismounting, picked out the pebbles from the horses' hoofs with the point of his dagger. He then selected three or four of the men, who appeared to be stout rustics, with no greater drawbacks in their military character than ignorance and inexperience, and posted them round the litter.

"Now, my lads," said he, "I mean to try your mettle. The man who draws bridle from a hard trot before we reach Limoisin, I will pin with this lance to the nearest tree! Away!" And away they flew, beneath the faint and fitful glimpses of the moon, like a legion of devils on their night vocations. The road at length became steep, and rugged, interrupted by thick belts of

brushwood, and cut asunder by gushing streams, more dangerous to the eye and ear than to the foot.

At this part of the way, Alain himself put his hand to the litter of the prisoner, to assist in steadying it, as they approached the summit of a steep, pointed rock ; but in doing so, he dropped the staff, which was not fastened, like his lance, to the saddle. The prisoner, apparently observing the occurrence, with a curiosity singular in a person so situated, suddenly leant out of the litter to gaze at the magic wand, as it fell from ledge to ledge of the rock.

"Holy Saints !" cried the knight. "Rosalie !"

"Alain !" He stooped from his saddle, and clasped her in his arms ; and in the confusion of joy and astonishment, the Damsel of Montenay returned the embrace.

A few words only were necessary to explain her appearance there. She had crossed the river, and reached the army just as the camp was breaking up. Being recognised for a woman through her male attire by one of the Duke's retainers, he had directed her, in order to pay his court to his voluptuous master, not to the Lord de Montenay whom she sought, but to the pavilion of the Duke himself. The nearest minister of his pleasures whom he could thoroughly trust was the Governor of the Château de Vincennes ; and the Lieutenant General, therefore, being at the moment busy himself with affairs of state, sent his prize to the care of that personage, in the rear of the escort of the Queen herself ; trusting, although fallaciously as it proved, that the Damsel's dress would conceal her sex from the proud and jealous Isabella.

"Rosalie concluded her story by declaring, that now, since she was under the protection of Alain, she felt no dread except on account of her father.

"He is so rash, so brave, so honourable," she said, "that were the power and nobility of all the grandees of the kingdom united in the single person of the insulter, he would grapple with him, even on the throne. The result of a struggle between him and the wretch of Orleans is evident. My father would be crushed, even as an insect is crushed by a man's foot. But it shall be

ordered otherwise. He shall never know the author of the outrage ; swear to me, Alain—swear to me by the hauberk which I perceive you wear, that, while the Duke of Orleans lives, the secret shall never pass your lips !”

“I swear it by my knighthood and my honour—by yourself. fairest Rosalie, and that is the holiest oath I know ! But you too must keep your word. You are aware that you owe me your father’s ransom—”

“And now my own !” added Rosalie, in a trembling voice.

“But we must choose another time to talk of these things.”

“True,” said the knight, with a sigh, “time is now pressing. We must immediately leave this road, which is more dangerous than you think, and make for a place of safety.” He had scarcely spoken the words when a shout like thunder fell upon his ears, and he was almost struck from his horse by a blow from a battle-axe. Most of his party threw down their arms and fled, but the few rustics posted near the litter kept their ground for an instant. Alain himself, cheering on his men to do their duty, and dealing lusty strokes with his sword almost at random, for the moon was hidden, kept for that instant the fortune of the fight in equipoise. As the rustics gave way, however, they were followed by the attacking party, all but one cavalier, who continued pertinaciously to level his furious blows at the defender of the litter.

This, no doubt, was the arch murderer ; the others perhaps were innocent of the true purpose of the enterprise ; and, strengthened by the hope of at least saving his mistress’s life, and gaining time to save her honour, the young knight closed with his enemy. The war-horses, snorting and screaming, bit and tore each other with the fierce instinct of their nature ; the battle-axes of the two enemies thundered upon their helmets without a moment’s cessation ; the visors of both were shattered to pieces as if by the same stroke, and both knew that the combat touched upon its conclusion. —

At this instant the stranger’s horse stumbled among the rocks, and a vigorous blow from Alain falling at the same time upon his helmet, he lost his seat and plunged upon the litter.

"Save him ! save him !" cried Rosalie, with a piercing shriek ; but Alain, determined to despatch him first and explain afterwards, threw himself from his steed and drew his dagger. At this moment the moon broke from the clouds that had shrouded her light, and Alain saw the Damsel of Montenay fainting in the arms of her father !

The adventurer, overwhelmed and confounded by the sight, stood gazing vacantly, as if fixed to the spot by enchantment. He neither stirred nor spoke ; but allowed the party of the Lord de Montenay to place him upon the saddle before a man-at-arms, bind his hands, and tie his legs under the horse's belly ; and in this state he was conveyed back to Paris, and lodged as a prisoner in a subterranean vault of the Hôtel de Montenay.

"Again I say," exclaimed Alain, when left alone, "is not this a dream ? and is this Damsel of Montenay any other than the night-hag who rides me in the shape of an angel of light ? I protect her from robbery and insult, and they make me hang a clerk of the University, and run into hiding to escape being hanged myself. I set her father at liberty from his enemies, and he challenges me to mortal combat : I venture my life as a desperate chance to save hers, and they transport me like a felon, with my legs tied under a horse's belly till the sinews crack, and throw me into a dungeon underground ! But is it just to charge all this upon Rosalie ? Ought my misfortunes not rather to be attributed to this accursed staff ? Had she not discovered me by its fall, we should have escaped the consequent detention, and avoided the encounter with her father, who had no doubt received information of the route of his daughter's travel—probably through the agency of the jealous Queen herself, determined to have two chances of getting the Damsel out of her way." Ruminating in this manner, and resolving to part company for ever with the fatal staff on the next favourable turn of his affairs—for his mother had warned him that such only was the proper time for doing so—he laid himself down on the damp ground of the dungeon, and, in spite of his misfortunes, fell asleep.

The next day he was carried as a prisoner before the Dauphin

in full court ; and when Alain saw the Duke of Orleans as usual at the ear of the Prince, he gave himself up for lost. The Lord de Montenay having charged the prisoner with the forcible abduction of his daughter, and to all appearance proved his guilt by the testimony of his men-at-arms, demanded that sentence should be pronounced against him, the same as if he had been vanquished in the judicial combat.

"This is but just," said the Dauphin ; "what say you, my Lord of Orleans?" The Duke changed colour.

"Sir," he replied, "I am not sure that it would be wholly politic, at a time like this, to throw away the head of a stout and promising young knight for such an offence, heinous as I allow it to be. Sir Alain, we should not forget, has performed a signal service to his country ; he will receive the advancement he deserves ; his birth, I have no doubt, is noble—let him marry the Damsel, in God's name, whom he so much covets, and there will be an end of the affair !"

"To that I say nay !" cried the Lord de Montenay fiercely ; "and I marvel much that such a counsel should be given by a master whom I have served with heart and hand all my life, and to whom my honour should be as dear as his own."

"Sir," said Alain to the Dauphin, who was endeavouring to soothe the enraged father, "if you permit me to live, I will try to deserve whatever advancement I may receive ; but I hold it inconsistent with my honour to persist longer even in hinting at a claim to noble birth. As a knight, and made so by one of the noblest knights in Christendom, I am not inferior in rank to the Lord de Montenay ; but as touching my birth, I am nothing more than a merchant's son, and a citizen of Paris."

"By Our Lady," cried the Dauphin, "this is the strangest honour I ever heard of ! Methinks your honour would have served you better, had it prevented you from committing at all so base and cowardly a crime."

"Sir," said Alain, "I have been guilty of no baseness or cowardice ; which I will prove with my body, if allowed an opportunity, against any gentleman here present."

"How! do you deny the charge of my Lord de Monténay?"

"I do."

"Then, who is the criminal? You were there, and must know."

"Sir, the same honour which you have condescended to ridicule forbids me to answer."

"He admits that he is an accomplice," cried the Lord de Monténay: "I demand that he be put to the torture!"

"I am ready," said Alain;—"tear me, morsel by morsel, with red-hot pincers, and you shall catch no meaning even from my groans." The Duke of Orleans whispered the Dauphin.

"This is a ravelled business," said the latter. "I will hope that the prisoner may be brought to confess, without the use of such strong persuasions. Let him be guarded to my private chamber of hearing, where he shall have audience. My Lord de Monténay, your honour is in my hands."

It was the Duke of Orleans whom Alain saw in the Dauphin's private chamber; and their conference was brief.

"You have nothing more to fear from the Lord de Monténay," said the Duke; "he is at this moment listening to a string of state reasons, which forbid, in the meantime, the disclosure of what you have confessed; and he is appeased by a promise that the hour of vengeance will not fail to come round soon. Here, for the present, is a purse of gold to pay your charges, and you may depend upon my friendship for all time to come."

"My Lord," replied Alain, "you owe me nothing: it is my own secret, not yours, that I keep so well. Had you been in my place a little while ago, I would have served the office of headsman myself, rather than your head had not fallen!"

"Go, go," said the Duke, "you are a foolish boy—this is some love matter! But you have spirit, and will think more wisely by-and-by. Away!"

Alain went home to his lodgings, not a little satisfied, were the truth known, that he had preserved his head; but yet sorely perplexed both with his present situation and prospects. To accept of advancement at the hands of the Duke of Orleans was out of

the question ; while to live without money was impossible. He was disliked by the lords of the French court in the interest of the Lord de Montenay, and at best an object of suspicion to the others. There were only two modes before him of gaining a subsistence ; and it was necessary to choose between them, and that instantly. Either he must doff his knighthood, and seek employment among the friends of his late father, or, with a scanty purse and bare appointments, he must journey into the neighbouring states, as a knight adventurer, and offer the service of his lance wherever it might be needed.

The Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy were, in the meantime, to all appearance good friends. The politicians of the times, however, according to the fashion of that class of men, shook their heads wisely. There was something ominous, they thought, in the very tranquillity of the two parties ; and when men congratulated themselves on the good prospects of the country, they only answered, " Wait ! wait ! "

Alain, after remaining for a considerable time in hesitation and perplexity, at last determined to accept of a small loan of money, which his relation the blacksmith offered him, now that he was a knight, and to travel into the Netherlands, where he understood there were matters going forward which called for the interposition of such wandering cavaliers as himself. His mother, who had no dread, on Alain's account, of the field, but a great horror of the block, and who, in ignorance of the share which the Duke of Orleans had in the business, believed that the axe was still suspended over her son's head, rather encouraged him in this project than otherwise ; and at length everything was completely arranged, and Alain prepared to bid adieu to his country.

All the afternoon before this important day, he was employed in walking round the Hôtel de Montenay, in a kind of vague hope of seeing the Damsel. Till now he had not so much as approached this quarter of the town, for fear of its being supposed that he did so with the view of forcing himself upon her recollection. Had he expected, then, that she was to have sought for him ? He did not know ; he only knew that all direct communication was cut off

between them, by his quarrel with her father ; and he *felt*, without being able to trace the feeling to its source, that on her—woman as she was—ought to devolve the task of making the first advances. The explanation is, that Alain was poor, and not high-born ; while Rosalie was the daughter and heiress of a great lord. He dated the breaking off of their acquaintance from the instant in which he had said, in the presence of the Dauphin and his court, “I am nothing more than the son of a merchant, and a citizen of Paris.”

His feelings on this subject were probably still the same ; but yet, in spite of himself, he could not help wishing to see her once more before leaving the country, which he should remember chiefly as the one containing her. It was in vain, however ; the evening drew gloomily in : it was six o'clock, and the citizens, shutting up their shops, and deserting the street, prepared to retire to supper, and soon after to bed. Alain walked slowly and sorrowfully home.

A letter—to him a very unusual object—was lying on the table, and he caught it up with a beating heart and a trembling hand. It ran thus :

“To the valiant Knight, Sir Alain de Vere, these from a friend, greeting.

“It is not unknown to me, that your generous interference in my affairs, and the readiness with which you have listened to my requests, have been the cause of many calamities to you. Neither am I ignorant that, if you choose to break your knightly faith, a single word from your lips would convert the wrath of my father into admiration and love. Notwithstanding, I venture again to intrude, and to offer you advice. Turn not away, because I once more start up in your path ; grow not pale that the bird of evil omen flaps again upon your window !

“My father is in doubt, as much as in wrath ; and he says, ‘If the Duke is satisfied of the youth’s honour, why does he not employ him?’ The remark is not unreasonable. But it is from a

still more selfish wish than that of restoring friendship between you and my father, that I now write. You are shut out from the paths of honour and preferment—and *I am the cause*. This thought deprives me of peace by day, and sleep by night. I implore you, for my sake—for I dare not, after what has passed, invoke your consent by anything higher and nobler—to accept of the patronage which I have reason to know is at your command. You ought to remember, that in bestowing public offices the Duke is nothing more than the minister and agent of his country. Wait upon him without the delay of an hour, for great projects are on foot which offer golden prospects to the brave and adventurous. Adieu. My pen dares not write how much my heart will be in your success."

Alain almost devoured the letter with kisses. His heart was full; he knew not whether he was about to weep or laugh. On examining it again he found that it was dated three days back. By what fatal mistake had its delivery been retarded? He determined, notwithstanding, to obey literally, so far as it was in his power, his Rosalie's injunction, and to go to the Duke of Orleans without the delay of an hour. He snatched up his elder-cane in a kind of remorse for the injustice he had done it, and sallied out of the house.

At the hôtel of St. Anthony he was informed that the Duke dined that day with the Queen at her house; and Alain, dreading to lose still more time before fulfilling the commands of his mistress, walked straight towards the Porte Barbette, where it was situated. It was now nearly seven o'clock, and the streets were dark and deserted. His spirits began to flag. What might not have happened in three days? The very name of the Queen seemed a sound of evil augury; and, his thoughts being led on from one thing to another, he at last imagined that there was something strange in his seizing so suddenly on this occasion the magic cane which he had not even looked upon since his trial before the Dauphin.

On arriving, however, near the Porte Barbette, he congratulated

himself that he had not listened to the suggestions of superstition, which would have persuaded him to throw away so useful a night companion ; for he could see by the doubtful light nearly a score of men lurking under a penthouse as he passed. Their object perhaps was robbery—perhaps conspiracy ; but these were things too familiar in the streets of Paris to excite more than a transient feeling of interest. He, however, cautiously kept the middle of the street, and passed on without interruption.

On reaching the Queen's hotel he found the Duke of Orleans was still there, and he determined to wait in the hall, which was used as a sort anteroom for visitors, and accost him as he was taking his departure. While standing near the door two men wrapped in cloaks entered from the street ; but the second, as if recollecting some sudden business, paused when he had crossed the threshold, and whispering his companion, went out again hastily. The other, advancing into the hall, threw his cloak back upon his shoulders, and was received with great respect by the attendants, being no less a personage than Scas de Courtheuze, valet de chambre to the King.

He had come in great haste with a message from his master to the Duke of Orleans, requiring him to go instantly to the Louvre ; and, while waiting to be announced, he seemed in considerable agitation, as if the affair brooked not a moment's delay. The idea suddenly struck Alain that this strangely-timed message might have some relation to the important projects hinted at by Rosalie, and he determined, notwithstanding the haste which the Duke might be in to obey the King's orders, at least to bow to him as he passed, and thus take hold of his recollection. He accosted Scas de Courtheuze with the usual demand of news, hoping that something might fall from this confidential minister to throw light upon the subject which engrossed him ; and when the Duke entered the hall, lighted out by the attendants, he was still in conversation with the royal valet de chambre.

"How now, Scas?" said the Duke, "is all well with our royal master?"

"My Lord," answered Scas, "I am commanded to say to you, that the King has business of great importance both to you and him, which he must communicate to you instantly."*

"In God's name, then I bring my mule to the door, and let some valets follow me with torches."

"My Lord, shall we call your other esquires? Here are only two, and one without his horse."

"It matters not. I stay not for ceremony when called upon in haste by my King. Mount, gentlemen, one behind the other. Come—torches!" At this moment Alain advanced, and made his bow.

"So, Sir Knight of the Magic Wand!" said the Duke, eyeing him with a haughty and ironical smile, "have you at last relented? and shall we no longer have the mortification and alarm to reckon you among the enemies of our person? Come to me in the morning;" and he went out and mounting his mule, rode off followed by four or five valets with torches running behind.*

Scas de Courtheuze had departed as soon as his message was delivered; and while drawing the hood of his dark cloak round his head, Alain thought, he knew not by what association, of the muffled figures he had seen lurking under the penthouse. It had been too dark for him to distinguish any individual of the group; but yet an indefinite feeling of alarm passed across his mind, and starting, as from a dream, when the Duke rode off, he was about to follow him in haste.†

"I pray you, Sir Knight," said one of the gentlemen of the household, who had some knowledge of Alain from report, "tarry but for a little while, and drink a cup of wine with us before you go."

"Sir, I thank you; I cannot——"

"Nay, let me entreat——"

"I pray you, excuse me; I have business;" and he ran out at full speed.

He had nearly overtaken the Duke's party; and the torches

* Monstrelet.

† Ibid.

being reflected on either side of the narrow street, made the place seem as clear as day. The next moment the light streamed under the penthouse, and the conspirators darting from their ambush, surrounded their prey. One blow served to sever his arm by the wrist.

"Villains!" exclaimed the victim, as much astonished as dismayed, "I am the Duke of Orleans!"

"We know it—it is you we want!" cried the assassins, and rushing upon him in a body, they struck him from his mule.

"To the rescue!" shouted a young lad, a German, who had been his page; and he threw himself upon the Duke's body to protect him. The act of generous fidelity was in vain; the poor youth was instantly slain where he lay, and his master's skull split in pieces.*

At this moment Alain reached the spot. The murderers fled, some on foot, and some mounted; and he could hear the crashing of glass and pointed iron upon the street, which they threw behind them to prevent a pursuit on horseback. The esquires' horse had taken fright at the sudden assault, and borne its masters clear of the danger, with or without their will;† and the torch-bearers, scattering in all directions, had disappeared at the first blow.

Alain stood for some moments, alone and in the dark, by the side of the mangled bodies. After the first thrill of horror was over, his thoughts reverted to his own situation, and with the quickness of lightning, the circumstances associating him with the transaction flashed before him. He had called at the hotel of St. Anthony, and ascertained the place where the Duke dined; he had pursued him to the Queen's house, without being able now or in future to assign any reason why he should thus pertinaciously seek an interview so much out of time and place; there he had been seen in conversation with Scas Courtheuze, who was beyond all doubt one of the assassins; the Duke, on going out, had alluded publicly to a supposed enmity borne to him by "the Knight of the Magic Wand"—thus fixing his identity in the minds of the by-

standers, by a fantastic title, alluding to his well-known cane ; and finally rejecting the friendly invitation of the gentlemen of the Queen's household, he, Alain, had rushed after the victim in evident haste and agitation.

Alain knew very well the summary process by which the business of persons suspected of the murder of a great lord is despatched ; and in the present case, while circumstances were so damningly against him, the only answer he could give was a simple denial of his guilt. In the meantime, sundry noises were heard in the distance ; windows were opened ; voices called and answered ; and the hasty tread of footsteps echoed along the street.

At this moment a light appeared in the building to which the penthouse belonged, and speedily the whole was in a blaze ; the wretches had no doubt set fire to their lodgings—an hotel having for sign the image of Our Lady—that they might escape more readily in the confusion.* Alain's eyes rested for an instant upon the ghastly spectacle of death which the flames revealed ; and then, cursing aloud his fate, he darted into a narrow avenue and fled.

That night, the Lord de Montenay and his daughter were alone in their supper-room, and just thinking of separating for the night, when a sound of altercation was heard without. Presently the door was thrown open, and a man rushed wildly in, whom they recognised with difficulty to be Sir Alain de Vere. The Lord de Montenay at the sight caught up a knife from the table, and put himself in a posture of defence ; and Rosalie, uttering a scream, threw herself into her father's arms.

" My Lord," said Alain, " my purpose is not assassination, any more than it was yours when you visited me. I cannot quarrel with the suspicion, however circumstances have given you a right to think me capable of any baseness ; but the time has now come when misapprehension, so far, shall have an end. It was the Duke of Orleans who was guilty of the abduction of your daughter. I was selected to convey the prey—little suspecting even her sex

* Monstrelet.

—to Limoisin ; principally, I imagine, from the hatred which it was supposed, from the circumstances of the duel, that I bore to your family. At the Château de Vincennes, I accidentally discovered that it was the purpose of the harlot-queen to have the party attacked, and my prisoner murdered—no doubt through jealousy—in the middle of the journey ; and you I mistook in the dark for the agent of the crime. I had, the instant before, recognised with astonishment the Damsel of Montenay ; and pledged, at her entreaty, my knightly faith never to reveal to you, while the Duke lived, that he was the author of the treason. Damsel of Montenay, I have kept my faith ; for the Duke of Orleans is no more !”

“How ! What ! No more ?” cried the Lord de Montenay.

“He is dead.”

“Dead !—How, for mercy’s sake !—of what disease ?”

“Of cold iron. I saw him with mine own eyes felled upon the street, even like an ox—his skull split asunder with a hatchet.”

“Who did this deed of hell ?”

“Why, to-morrow, they will tell you it was I !”

“But they will tell a falsehood,” cried the Damsel suddenly—
“an odious, traitorous, damned falsehood !”

“No matter : they will say that, all on a sudden, I sought him pertinaciously out—him who till that moment I had avoided, as one shrinks from a snake—that I traced him from his own hotel to that of the Queen ; and thus, from circumstance to circumstance, they will bring the guilt home to me in spite of Heaven.”

“And what will you say in answer ?”

• “That I am innocent.”

“No more ?”

“Not a sentence—not a word—not a syllable, were they to crucify me.”

“Then I will !” and the Damsel, sinking into a chair, gave way to the weakness of her sex in a few hysterical sobs.

“Away, my father !” she said ; “this is nothing—I am well : give me room to speak, or my heart will burst. It was I—even Rosalie, your daughter, who implored this young Knight, in a

letter written by my own hand, and only forwarded this evening, for want of an earlier secret opportunity, to find out the Duke of Orleans, without the loss of an hour !”

“And why, in Heaven’s name ?” Rosalie blushed deeply.

“Sir,” she said, “I owed him a ransom for my life, my honour, and my father’s head—and it was paid in hatred, violence, and persecution. I knew, from your own discourse, that there was now a public opening for his worth and talents, and that the Duke of Orleans was anxious to employ him ; but I knew also, that, so far from applying, he would have shrunk back from any overtures from such a quarter. And then I thought—perhaps it was wrong—perhaps it was foolish ; but I did think—that is, I imagined—I dreamed that it was on my account—that—that—” And poor Rosalie, overcome by her emotion, and unable to get on farther in the explanation, leant her head on her father’s shoulder and wept.

“Sir Alain,” asked the Lord de Montenay, “is the Queen aware of your innocence in this matter ?”

“She knows me only as the confidential agent of the Duke.”

“The Governor of the Château de Vincennes was the creature of the Duke of Orleans, but he is the deadly enemy of the Queen. We have her in the toils. If she cannot fall upon a plan of saving your life—let her look to her own !” The Lord de Montenay then desiring his daughter to pay due attention to their guest in his absence, set out for the *Porte Barbette*.

The evidence was still stronger against Sir Alain than he expected ; for in his agitation, while standing beside the dead bodies, he had dropped his cane, and in the morning it was found daubed with blood in the street. The counter-evidence, however, of Queen Isabella, who was the greatest loser in the kingdom by the death of the Duke of Orleans, was of much avail ; and it was liberally and eagerly offered, after an interview which took place between her and the Lord de Montenay. That very day Alain was at liberty to go to his kinsman the blacksmith’s.

“Mother,” said he, “I have been busier than ever. I have seen the Duke of Orleans murdered ; I have lost my magic cane ; and I am going to be married !”

"God be praised !" said the widow, "and especially for the last. I hope marriage will quiet you."

"I hope so ; but in the meantime, put on your highest bonnet, and come with me to the Hôtel de Montenay."

Passing the church of the Guillemins, where the body of the murdered Duke had been deposited in a leaden coffin, and watched all night by the monks chanting prayers and hymns, Alain and his mother drew near for curiosity. The funeral was about to be performed, and they joined the cortège. The principal officers of the household of the deceased carried the body out of the church, attended by his esquires bearing lighted torches. Around the bier were, in due order, shedding tears as they marched, the King of Sicily, and the Dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Bourbon, each holding a corner of the pall. After the body followed the other princes, and the clergy and barons, according to their rank, recommending his soul to his Creator ; and thus they proceeded to the church of the Celestins ; where, a most solemn service having been performed, the body was interred in a beautiful chapel founded and built by the late Duke himself.* Mingling with this imposing ceremony, nay, even holding a corner of the pall, there was one man on whom the eyes of the multitude were fixed in wonder and horror. This was the Duke of Burgundy, already known by public report, afterwards confirmed by his own confession, as the contriver of the murder.†

Alain had one other sight to encounter before reaching the home of his love, and the scene of his future years of happiness. In compliance with the earnest request of his mother, he had diverged from the proper route to the Hôtel de Montenay, to

* Monstrelet.

† Ibid. Enguerrand de Monstrelet was born before the close of the fourteenth century, probably in Picardy, and is supposed to have been the natural son of a nobleman. His chronicle, which indeed bears some claim to the title of a history, although a very bad one, was written in Cambray, of which he was governor, holding this office at the same time with that of bailiff of Wallaincourt. The work is justly characterised by Mr. Dacier (*Mém. Acad. Belles Lettres*) as being heavy, monotonous, weak, and diffuse. He died in 1452.

show her the spot where the murder had been committed. Here they found the city officers, surrounded by an immense rabble, engaged in burning publicly the fragments of weapons and other rubbish which might, by possibility, have been implicated in the crime. Among the rest was the MAGIC WAND.

"Let it burn!" said Mademoiselle de Vere, as her son suddenly withdrew his arm—"let it burn, as you hope for good luck!" and he did so. The leaf of vervain which it contained (according to oral tradition), when it became red-hot, mounted into the air, and floated over the tops of the houses; while the wolf's eyes, the lapwing's stone, and the green lizards rolled and ran for some time through the flames, to the great amazement of the crowd—and then disappeared in smoke. It is due, however, to auctorial dignity to confess, that with regard to the truth or falsehood of *these* details of the narrative, history is silent.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Sixteenth Century.

1498.—LOUIS XII. was the same Duke of Orleans who disputed the regency fourteen years before, as the first prince of the blood. He bears an excellent character in history ; and, indeed, his love for the people seems to have borne no reference to the scale of their willingness or capacity to pay taxes. He had faults, however, or rather he was the agent and instrument of the faults of the time. The nation was agog for glory, and the patriots were determined to support with their "lives and fortunes" some cause or other. The countries of Europe, besides, were beginning to enter into closer relations with each other ; the systems of negotiations had entered into an alliance with the practice of war ; and the cunning roguery of Louis XI. was already reduced to a science.

The King divorced his wife, in order to marry the widow of Charles VIII., Anne of Brittany, and thus preserve her dowry, Brittany, to the crown of France. He conquered Milan and Naples almost at a blow, and lost them again as suddenly. He would then have signed a treaty, giving away his daughter in marriage, with a third of France for her dowry, if not prevented by the States.

His next battle was fought against the Venetians, whom he defeated ; and he then declared war against Julius II., a famous fighting Pope, who, as well as the King of Spain, had betrayed him.

1512.—The battle of Ravenna was gained by the French, under the conduct of the celebrated Gaston de Foix, who died there at the proper age to be canonized as a hero of romance. They were obliged to retire, however, from the Milanais, in spite of the efforts of the no less celebrated Bayard, the knight without fear and without reproach.

1515.—The English, in the meantime, beat the French in Picardy, and the Swiss made an incursion as far as Dijon. Louis entered into a treaty with Henry VIII., whose sister Mary he married ; and at last died, after having reduced the taxes, protected the poor, reformed justice, and lost and won many battles.

1515.—Francis I. would have made a glorious knight-errant. He would have loved, and fought, and danced, and sung in the most brilliant manner possible. After all, he was a very gentlemanly king ; which was so far well, as France by this time had become an almost absolute monarchy. .

Finances being low, he sold the judges their seats to fit him out for the war in Italy. He defeated the Swiss in the Emperor's pry (the Swiss were now the hired bravos of Europe) at Marignan. He concluded a treaty with Leo X, which destroyed the Pragmatic Sanction, the grand bulwark of the independence of the Church. He raised up for himself a terrible enemy in the person of the Emperor Charles V., whose succession he ridiculously opposed.

Francis now entered into a treaty of alliance with Henry VIII. of England; and at a meeting with his new friend on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, spent a great deal more money in toys and gingerbread than the alliance was worth. By the intrigues of the Emperor, this union was soon dissolved; and speedily all Europe, with the Pope at its head, was in league against France. The royal Knight-errant was nothing daunted. At an encounter between the Germans, commanded by the Constable de Bourbon, who had left his service in dudgeon, and the French Admiral Bonnivet, Bayard was killed.

1525 — Francis passed into Italy, and notwithstanding all remonstrances fought the pitched battle of Pavia, where, after having conducted himself like a true hero of chivalry, and seen nearly his whole army perish, he was taken prisoner, and carried to Madrid.

He was set at liberty on consenting to deliver up Burgundy; but when it came to the point, Burgundy would not allow itself to be delivered up, and the ransom was afterwards paid in gold crowns, to the amount of two millions. Francis, in the meantime, in league with Henry VIII., the Venetians, and a new Pope, against the Emperor, crossed the Alps once more, and besieged Naples. Here the plague got into his army, and he evacuated Italy anew. The Duke of Bourbon, about this time, being in want of money to pay his troops, pillaged Rome, and captured the Pope, but Charles V., while pocketing the ransom, had the devotion to ask pardon of the Holy Father for the outrage.

This is the epoch of the reformation of the Protestants, who were so called, because they protested against the Diet of Spire which condemned their heretical opinions. Francis I., knowing nothing of controversy, roasted a few of these persons at a slow fire.

1535 — New pretensions to Milan, on the part of Francis, and an invasion of France by the Emperor; both without effect. The latter being accused of poisoning the Dauphin, was cited before the Parliament, and, in default of appearance, condemned to lose, as a fine, Artois and Flanders. Francis allied himself with the Sultan Soliman; and in a new war his galleys were seen joined with those of Barbarossa. In Italy, the Count d'Enghien gained a fruitless battle; the Emperor, leagued with Henry VIII., penetrated as far as Soissons, and a peace was signed at Cressy.

Two cantons of Provence embraced Lutheranism, which seemed to bear some resemblance to the Albigensian doctrines of their fathers; and the army, on its

return from Italy, were enabled to wash out their stains of pillage and murder with the blood of three thousand of these heretics. Calvin, notwithstanding, found no difficulty in gaining proselytes to a still severer reform.

1547 — Francis at length died. He was one of the most absolute kings that ever reigned in France. He substituted for the States assemblies of notables (or great men), whose business it was to approve, and he taxed the people without any other authority than his own royal will. He was, however, a patron of letters and the arts, and he founded the College of France, and introduced the use of the national language in public deeds.

1547 — Henry II. was a king of the same stamp. He continued the war against the Emperor Charles, and took Metz, Toul, and Verdun in 1553. Before Metz, the Emperor, with an army of a hundred thousand men, was repulsed by the Duke de Guise, and soon after he had avenged this dishonour by the destruction of two towns, he retired to a convent. The Spaniards, under the Duke of Savoy, gained a victory at Saint Quentin, which made Paris itself tremble, but nevertheless they judged it expedient to retire, and the Duke de Guise retrieved the national reputation by taking Calais from the English. A peace at length was signed at Catcau Cambie, and soon after Henry was killed in a tournament by one of his knights, whom he would force to play with him.

1559 — Francis II. was the husband of the celebrated Mary Stuart. The King makes no figure in this brief reign. It was the epoch at which the Guises and Bourbons began to fight about religion, and when the Protestants died in bonfires no longer, but sword in hand.

1560 — The accession of Charles IX., when a boy, brought with it more than the usual horrors of a minority. Catherine de Medicis, the widow of Henry II., who protected and betrayed all parties by turn, proposed a mode of settling the question which has lately been revived by some worthy persons in England and Ireland—a public deputation. It took place at Poissy, and of course strengthened the conviction and embittered the feelings of the well-meaning mass of both sides. Then followed the massacre, almost accidental, of the Calvinist Huguenots (confederates) at Vassy, in Champagne, and a civil war fairly broke out.

1563 — The two parties fought at Dreux, Saint Denis, Jarnac, and other places, with various success, and among the assassinations committed by both were those of the Duke de Guise and the Prince of Conde. At length a peace was concluded advantageous to the Protestants, who were guaranteed civil and religious liberty. Their leaders were invited to the court, and caressed by Catherine de Medicis, and men began to breathe freely and dream of quiet. Young Henry of Navarre, the nominal chief of the party, was married to the King's sister, and the joyous festivities incident on the occasion were about to melt into the tranquillity of happiness.

1572.—In the midst of all this, on the evening of Sunday, the 24th of

August, the festival of St. Bartholomew, the Duke of Guise went in the twilight to the Provost of Paris, with a message from the King. The Provost was directed, on the tolling of the great bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, to illuminate the city. In the interval, King Charles was seized with a fit of ague; his frame trembled and cold sweats broke over his forehead. Catherine de Medicis demanded from him an order of state, which was slowly granted; and dreading the fickleness of one whom she knew well to be a slave, coward, and traitor, the butcheress caused the signal to be given at once, although it was an hour before the concerted time. The great bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois tolled. The work of hell began; and so zealous were the labourers that in two days it was accomplished in the greater part, and they were able to take the rest of the week to finish leisurely. The echoes of the great bell of St. Germain were heard that night in many of the provinces, and everywhere the effects were the same. In Paris the King assisted personally, and bravely shot from his palace windows the Huguenots who had fled at the steps of the murderers. The Parliament applauded this truly surprising effort of Catholic devotion, and observed an annual procession of triumph and thanksgiving in honour of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew.

1573.—The Protestants were not exterminated. The war rekindled; and the Duke of Anjou lost eighty thousand men at the siege of La Rochelle. Even the women fought; they turned the tears of their sex into blood, and their shrieks of terror into war-cries. In the meantime the King died. He was a perpetrator of miserable verses; and he patronized authors and critics.

1574.—Henry III. at first patronized a federation of the ultra Catholics, under the Duke of Guise, calling itself the League; but this party did not manage tenderly enough his royal dignity. The war of the three Henrys—viz., the King, the Duke of Guise, and the King of Navarre, was followed by an insurrection at Paris, known by the name of the Sixteen, from the sixteen quarters of the communes. The Sorbonne decided that it was lawful to deprive princes incapable of governing of the right of government; the leaguers dictated measures to the King; the King called in the aid of his Swiss; the citizens of Paris flew to arms, barricaded the streets, and surrounded the troops, and the King fled.

Unable otherwise to rid himself of the Guises, Henry assassinated them; united his forces—then very small indeed—with Henry of Navarre; and fell himself under the knife of an assassin.

1589.—Henry of Bourbon-Navarre, or Henri Quatre, is to this day the most popular of the French kings. Brought up in the midst of hardships, he wanted at one time almost the necessities of life, and was about to pass into England. Beating Mayenne, however, at Arques, 1590, with a handful of men, and in the following year at Ivry, he thought his fortune worth trying in his own country. He blockaded Paris, but the siege was raised by the Duke of Parma; and afterwards Rouen, with the same bad luck. At last the moderate

Catholics, weary of bloodshed, offered to recognise him as King, on condition of his abjuring his heresy ; and Henry, thinking, as he said himself, that Paris was well worth a mass, consented, and entered the city on the 22nd of March.

Henry re-established the Parliament ; banished the Jesuits ; conquered Mayenne at Fontaine-Française ; repulsed the Spaniards, subdued the Governor of Brittany, who held still for the League ; signed a treaty with Philip of Spain ; and, more important than all, promulgated the Edict of Nantes in favour of his Protestant subjects, to whom it permitted the exercise of their religion, under restrictions scarcely more onerous than those that were maintained against Catholics in the most civilized country of Europe half a century ago.

In this century, the influence of women, always dangerous in affairs of state, began to be felt on the fortunes of France. The dissoluteness of court manners about the reign of Henry II. was great.

This is the epoch of Copernicus, Galileo, and Torricelli—of the English Bacon, of Montaigne, of Morus, Bodin, and Grotius : it is therefore the most glorious we have yet arrived at for truth and civilization.



The Rock of the Fort.

Where there's a will, there's a way.

OLD PROVERB.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, love will enter in where it darna well be seen !

BURNS.

ON the twenty-sixth day of March, 1594, the city of Rouen presented a scene of very unusual bustle. The Marquis of Rosny, better known as the Duke of Sully, had arrived from Paris ; and it was expected that the brave and honest Admiral Villars, whose interest carried with it not only Rouen, but the whole of the country of Caux, would publicly declare for the King. The civil war had spent its fury ; the conqueror had declared himself, since it was necessary, to be of the religion of the majority of the people, and thus both of the contending parties triumphed ; the terrible League was fading away upon the horizon of France, like some phantom of the night before the rising sun ; and men threw away their dripping swords, and with voices still hoarse with the shouts of war, cried "Vive Henri Quatre !"

The grand square of Rouen and the adjacent streets, on this occasion, were filled to overflowing, and still the population of the surrounding country continued to pour into the reservoir. The river which runs past the city glittered in the vernal sun, and the happy faces which crowded its banks, and rushed tumultuously across its wooden bridges, seemed to have caught the reflection.

Large parties of all ranks were continually seen through the trees, descending the rocks, where the broad and rapid stream first bursts upon the view of the spectator ; while the joyful shouts of the men, and the playful screams of the village lasses, clad in the picturesque costume of the country, as they chased one another down the steep, at once gladdened and confused the ear.

The gallant Admiral of France, as yet holding for the League, and the ostensible enemy of his King, with the Baron de Médavy, and the President de Bognemare, surrounded by the authorities and troops of the town, were posted in the grand square ; and as Rosny appeared with a guard of honour, so great was the crowd, that he had much difficulty in obtaining entrance. When at length, however, he was sufficiently near, he pronounced an address to the Admiral, reminding him that the King was now a Catholic ; and, as there was no longer any pretext for disaffection, that it was his duty, as a good subject, to show his zeal and loyalty.

Villars, in his reply, declared that he was already in his heart the faithful servant of his Majesty ; and that he was anxious to prove it by receiving, at the hands of the envoy, the white scarf, which ought to be the badge no longer of a party but of the country. He was accordingly girded with the royal emblem, and the bystanders bent eagerly forward to hear his speech on so important and interesting an occasion. The noise occasioned by the movement sunk into profound silence.

"Allons morbieu !" cried the brave Admiral, with an eloquence more home and pithy than that of Demosthenes, "allons morbieu ! the League is nothing more than that we all cry, God save the King !" A shout burst simultaneously from the multitude ; and mingling with the deep tones of the men, the voices of the women and children rose shrilly into the air, as they all cried, "God save the King !" In an instant the sound was joined by the pealing of the great bell of the city, followed by all the others, and this by the thunder of artillery from the fort and batteries ; the whole forming a noise, says Sully, fit to inspire terror, if the general sentiment of joy had allowed any one to observe

that there was not a house in the city which did not shake to its foundation.*

"These bells," said he to the governor, "remind us that we ought to go and return thanks to God in the Church of Notre Dame;" and the motion being received with becoming applause, the church was soon crowded, and its venerable roof rang to the solemn hymn of *Te Deum*, which was followed by the splendid service of the mass.

Among the spectators of the ceremony in the square, there had been a horseman, who apparently had ridden a considerable distance to witness it; but who, after all, could scarcely be said to be in time, as, in the outskirts of the crowd, he was unable to obtain more than a very imperfect view of the principal personages. He was a young—indeed a very young man, although this could scarcely have been discovered on casual observation; his figure, although fully the middle height, being singularly athletic and trimly formed, and his face flushed with the dark ruddy colour which the action of foreign climates, or rough weather, imparts to fair complexions. His horse was a good serviceable roadster, such as a gentleman would by no means disdain to travel on; and, through the dust which covered the dress of the rider, it might have been discovered that, although far from likely to be a rich man, he yet laid claim to a certain rank and consideration in society. Not many, indeed, on observing his air and manner would have been unwilling to allow him a due share of polite respect; and the few, whose moral perceptions were lost in their devotion to fine clothes, found a certain something in the stranger's eye, which extorted the deference from their prudence which was grudged by their vanity.

The young man certainly seemed to be an interested, but not altogether a pleased spectator. His less amiable feelings, however, were occasionally subdued in the course of the ceremony, and at its conclusion, he joined, as if involuntarily, in the shout of "God save the King!" with an honesty of enthusiasm and a

loudness of lungs, not excelled by those of any of his neighbours ; when it was over, however, he seemed half to repent his condescension.

"Pshaw !" said he, in a grumbling voice of soliloquy, "what a noise we are making here !—and yet, I dare say, if one knew all, there are few except Villars himself, who are paid for the piping. What would this day have been but for me ? Who broke off the negotiations between these two parties ? and who again, by a single word of his mouth, enabled the King to talk in a voice to which even the Admiral could not affect deafness ? Why I, simple *Sieur de Boisrosé* ; and here I stand, shouting till I am hoarse, for *Henri of Navarre*, who thus profits by my prowess, without acknowledging the service even by a bow—and in honour of the Admiral Villars, who is now reaping the fruits of my labour—and of the vagabond *Rosny*, by whose councils I am set aside and forgotten ! Ay, shout, shout, ye ragamuffins, out with it—huzza ! I pray Heaven ye be all as well rewarded as myself !" The *Sieur de Boisrosé* then turned his horse in high dudgeon, and putting him up at a hostelry near the river side, sought to wreak his vengeance on the good things at the *table d'hôte*, which was supplied with an abundance worthy of the patronage it that day received.

Having slept indifferently well for a disappointed man, he set out betimes the next morning for *Louviers*, leaving his enemy *Rosny* enjoying his good fortune, the whole town preparing to go to his hotel in procession, for the purpose of presenting him with a vase of silver gilt, worth three thousand crowns.*

Boisrosé journeyed leisurely along the road, concerting within himself a plan for bespeaking the King's attention to his affairs. He knew little of the court, or royalty, and was quite bewildered as to the proper method of reminding a crowned head of a service, and claiming the performance of a promise. All he knew was, that interest went farther than merit ; and that a letter from his old acquaintance *Rollet*, the Governor of *Louviers*, who had

always been a staunch royalist, was more likely to be attended to by Henri Quatre, than an unsupported application from himself. It was for the purpose of obtaining this document that he had taken Louviers on his way to Paris from Feschamp, a fortress on the borders of the sea.

On reaching the town, he rode up to an inn and dismounted; but a great lord, with a retinue several hundred yards long, having just arrived at the same house, it was some time before the unattended traveller could find any one condescending enough to take charge of his horse. Boisrosé, however, was amply consoled for the neglect, for a fortunate idea had struck him, as he gazed on the splendour of the other's equipage.

"Who knows," thought he, "what may be the character of this personage? Can it be that all great lords are mean, selfish, and tyrannical? I will not believe it. He has an honest look, and I will trust him with my story. Oh, if he but takes the affair in hand! his interest, I am convinced, is worth a hundred of Rollet's, and I shall be sure to prosper."

The person thus selected for a patron by the traveller, was a man apparently about thirty-five; his features were sharp, and there was as much shrewdness in the expression as was consistent with an appearance of integrity. He was dressed in a coat of mail, over which was thrown a rich mantle; and his remarkably fine oval beard hung gracefully over a double frill, which, in the fashion of the day, encircled his neck.

In pursuance of his resolution, Boisrosé waited upon the stranger, and was received with a frankness and affability which made him feel quite at home. In a few minutes, he had told his name and business, and his patron elect catechised him on the subject like one accustomed to business.

"I recollect the circumstance," said he, "very well, although not all the details. You are the gentleman who, unassisted except by the companions you prevailed upon to accompany you, surprised the fortress of Feschamp, in a manner so daring, as to be almost incredible. The singular dangers attending your adventure, I remember, made my head giddy but to hear of; and

all men said that you must have been prompted to the enterprise either by love or madness." The young man blushed.

"It matters not," said he, "as for that; by the aid of God and my comrades, I achieved what I attempted. Being then in the interest of the League, as every good Catholic should have been, I offered my capture to Admiral Villars, on condition of being made governor of the fort. The Admiral, on hearing that so important a place had fallen into his hands, broke off the negotiations he had commenced with the King; but, instead of making any direct and honest reply to the terms I had proposed, sent his troops to take possession. This maddened me, and, learning at the instant that Henri had come over to the true faith, I felt myself absolved from all obedience to the League, which, indeed, was never to be respected for its persons, but solely for its religious purpose—and I proposed the same terms to him."

"Well, and how sped you?"

"The terms were accepted."

• "And you became Governor of Feschamp?"

"As much," said the traveller, grinding his teeth, "as you are governor of purgatory! I was inveigled out of the fortress, which, with the assistance of my brave comrades, I might have held against one half of France, by Marshal Biron. He promised me, in the King's name, ample indemnification, of which, up to this good hour, I have heard nothing more; and now, I presume, the Marshal has as little ability as his master has inclination to keep the promise, for I was myself witness, no longer ago than yesterday, to a ceremony which gives virtually up to Admiral Villars—who has no cause to love me—not only Feschamp, but the whole country of Caux."

"This is a strange story," remarked the grandee; "our royal master has always been reported great and bountiful."

"And so he may be," said Boisrosé; "but a word in your ear—he has a pack of rascals behind him, who whisper poison."

"Whom do you accuse?"

"Why, the hang-dog Rosny alone is enough to undo fifty kings! Do you know him? No, you do not; or you would be

at no loss to guess who was at the bottom when mischief was brewing. He is the veriest viper on the face of the earth—a cheating, cozening, slandering, lying—Ah, vagabond! if he were but here!” and Boisrosé, with flushing cheek and swelling temples, clenched his hands in his patron’s face, while he stamped upon the floor with rage and disdain. The grandee smiled gravely at the young man’s warmth.

“Sir,” said he, “I fear you do less than justice to the Marquis of Rosny. If he has really done you this wrong, it would appear to me to have proceeded rather from necessity than malevolence. At all events, I pledge my word that the affair shall be inquired into. Call on me after my arrival at the court, for I shall be sure to have news to tell you.” He then dismissed his protégé with true courtier-like politeness, and Boisrosé descended the stairs intoxicated with his good fortune. He stood at the door while the great man, who was travelling in haste, and had only called for a brief refreshment, took his departure.

“Who is that?” he whispered to one of the bystanders, when the gorgeous cavalcade was in motion.

“The Marquis de Rosny.” *

Boisrosé was thunderstruck, overwhelmed, annihilated. Recovering, however, in an instant, he dragged out his horse with his own hands, threw himself into the saddle, and scarcely drew bridle till he had reached Paris. There he obtained an introduction into the King’s presence, and, not having arranged his papers, or drawn up a proper statement of the case, the only request he made to his Majesty was, that he would not give faith to aught M. Rosny might say on the subject, who, he might be assured, would speak from an old grudge. He then retired to his lodgings to concert, in great trepidation, measures of defence against the powerful favourite.

The Marquis of Rosny, in the meantime, perfectly aware that he played a sure game with such an enemy as the odd, passionate, and unsuspecting Boisrosé, did not put himself in the least out of

the way. He proceeded to Mante, whither he had originally intended to go, and from thence journeyed leisurely with his Marchioness, whom he met there, to Paris. Boisrosé heard of his arrival, and passed some days in an agony of passion, tempered occasionally by such fits of civil fear as a man of military courage may feel.

At last the storm broke. He was sent for officially by M. Rosny himself, and late in the evening he followed the messenger to the palace of the Louvre, like a criminal going to execution.

He was conducted through several suites of rooms dimly lighted, till he arrived at a little apartment resembling an antechamber ; and there he found his enemy alone.

"So, sir," said M. Rosny calmly, "you have put me upon my trial? Come in, we shall see who gains the cause;" and opening a door suddenly, a blaze of light flashed upon the eyes of Boisrosé which almost stupefied him. The room was not very large, but it was more sumptuously furnished than any fairy palace he had ever dreamed of. It was illumined by naked statues of admirable workmanship, placed round the walls, and bearing lights of perfumed wax in their hands ; and between every two of these stood a richly gilded sofa, with cushions that appeared as if swelling to the touch.

On one of those reclined a female form, so motionless and so lovely, that Boisrosé, at the first glance, imagined it to be some dead wonder of art intended to mock Nature by surpassing her most perfect creations. The eyes of the exquisite statue, however, were alive ; and they fixed themselves on the youth's face as he entered, with a gaze, which, although expressing only simple curiosity, brought the blood into his face, and made his heart beat and his breath come thick. A man stood behind the sofa, on the back of which his hands rested ; and his head was bent down, as if to drink in at leisure the full delight of the spectacle before him. He did not look up when the door opened ; and M. Rosny, after advancing a few paces, stopped respectfully. At length the worshipper of beauty raised his head ; and both visitors bent their knees, as they saw the King of France.

Henri came forward ; and after looking for some time at the youth with evident curiosity, he exchanged a glance of remark with his fair companion, who replied with the intelligence which love and habit teach.

"So, my Lord," said he, "you have brought your prisoner. Let us hear what he has to say for himself. Are you still in the vein, Gabrielle?" Madame de Liancourt looked yes, but did not take the trouble of moving her lips even into a smile.

"Sir," said M. Rosny, addressing the culprit, "you are required, in the first place, to state to his Majesty the particulars of the adventure on the success of which you found a claim upon his justice. His Majesty will graciously permit you to sit down during the recital ; and you are particularly desired to omit nothing which may explain either your motives for the enterprise, or its details." Boisroisé was then made to seat himself in such a position as to allow the light to stream full upon his manly, handsome, and intelligent face ; and after hemming away a kind of qualm that passed through his heart, he covered his eyes with his hands for a moment, as if recollecting his story, and then began as follows :—

"I was a sailor in my youth," said he.

"How long is that ago?" asked Gabrielle suddenly. The King laughed, and Rosny smiled ; but Boisrosé, after considering gravely for a moment, answered—

"Two years and nine months, Mademoiselle D'Estrées." Rosny coughed and frowned, and shook his head at the unfortunate story-teller.

"My Lady," said the latter, looking alarmed, "I hope I have made no mistake. I have been so much at sea, that indeed I know little about the land in any quarter, far less the court. I have seldom heard you called by any other name than that of the Beautiful Gabrielle." The beauty smiled, and the monarch, stealing his arm round her waist, bent his head upon her shoulder. Rosny nodded, as if he said "Well done !"

"I was a sailor in my youth," resumed Boisrosé, "and made several voyages to the West Indies ; but receiving a hurt in an en-

counter with certain pirates, I went home to my native town of Feschamp, and was laid on the shelf. Here, while getting well of one malady, I fell ill of another. My family had some time or other been among the wealthiest of the place, and even now that it was fallen into decay, continued to make strong pretensions to gentility. We were visited occasionally by almost all the respectable persons, as belonging to their own caste in society ; and although we could no longer give entertainments, yet a seat in the porch on a fine evening, and a handful of sour grapes, answered the purpose as well to people who were too proud to accept of anything better in return.

"Our principal inhabitant was a M. Bellegrade, a widower, as powerful as the governor himself, and far richer. It was said that, after the death of his wife, he paid his addresses to my mother, then a widow—but I do not believe it. He called frequently, it is true, and drank cider, and looked as if he wished that my father had left her a handsome jointure, but he went no further, prudence came to his aid—and at last he gave up calling, for ten years at a stretch, and then——"

"And then," assisted Gabrielle, "he found it was not worth his trouble to keep away?"

"Precisely. His daughter, however, Monique, was constant throughout in her visits, and at last came to look upon my mother as her own. She was my companion for many years—a little creature whom I played with as one would with a doll, but when I came home from sea, she had grown—how she had grown !

"When fairly laid on my bed on shore, I grew sick with the stability of the land ; the smell of the grass, and the stones, and the trees, was too much for the delicacy of nerves that had been nourished with the pure and odorous breath of the ocean ; and then the doctors came, with their long faces, and then the astrologers, and then the priests ; and my mother began to weep that her only son was going to Heaven.

"Monique was all this time, or almost all this time, at my bed side. In the intervals of my fever, without forgetting her identity

for a moment, I thought she was an angel newly alighted, and breathing of Paradise. It was strange that I knew her at the same moment in both characters; yet it was so. I saw her wings as plainly as the shoulders from which they waved. When I began to get better, she sang to me, and read to me—no woman had ever such a voice!—and I told her of my voyages, and my battles, and my wounds—and of the strange lands I had seen, and the birds of glorious plumage, and the roar of the wild beasts as it boomed at night over the desert sea. And then we spoke of storms and shipwrecks; and I told her how we had driven on a dark night, before the tempest, our sails riven into strips; and how we struck upon the dread lee-shore; and how the waves swept wildly over us, shrieking as they flew; and how I was washed upon the beach by the so potent billows, and stood helpless and alone upon that savage coast, a naked, bleeding, famishing sea-boy. And then she wept; and then I wept too that she did weep—and then—and then—” Boisrosé wiped his face—“and then we fell in love!

“I was long of getting well, your Majesty——”

“What! of your passion?” asked Gabrielle.

“No, Madam,” said Boisrosé gravely; “it is not of gallantry I am talking, but of love—and we all know that is incurable!” The King smiled tenderly; Gabrielle pressed his hand; and the Marquis of Rosny laughed.

“I was long of getting well,” continued the narrator; “but at length my strength returned, and, in process of time, I became stronger than ever. In these days, your Majesty was not a true believer, and you were compelled to wade through blood to a throne which is columned round with the institutions of the most holy Catholic Church. Among the rest of the honest men of the time, our governor shut his doors against you, and hoisted the standard of the League on his ramparts. Then your General Biron came against us, with an overwhelming force—a swaggering bravo, who was an excellent captain, but would have made a still better trumpeter; and after a time, we saw with absolute certainty how the affair would go.

"We at last surrendered of our own free will, to prevent the enemy from boasting that they had taken the place from us by force; the terms were, that all who choose should be allowed to march out, bag and baggage; and I forgot the shame of defeat in anticipation of the joy I should feel in guarding Monique to a place of safety, and assisting to establish her family in some more continuing city. When we were all prepared, knapsack on shoulder, to throw open the gates of our little town, I hastened to M. Bellegrade's house.

"'And so you are going?' said he—'Well—give my compliments to your mother; and tell her, when the country is settled one way or other, and we are all comfortable, I shall be happy to see her again.'

"'What do you mean, M. Bellegrade?' said I, beginning to perspire—'Do you not know that the place is just about to be evacuated?'

"'Not by me, young man,' he replied—'not by me. Why should I leave a spot in which I have grown and flourished, and where I hope to wither and die? What is it to me who calls himself Governor of Feschamp, or what is the colour of the flag which waves on the ramparts? Here I shall live as usual, respected, and die comfortably—for these poor knaves of Protestants will be only too happy to be patronized by a substantial man like me. You know, I have not troubled myself with the defence of the place; I have done the conquerors no injury; and they can have no pretext for injuring me. Thank the saints, I am neither a soldier nor a sailor; I employ myself in collecting my rents, selling my commodities to the best advantage, and keeping short accounts. You are in quite a different case. If you have any trade at all—which may be a matter of doubt—it is war; you have played the very devil with these people who are now knocking at the gates, and I only marvel that they let you out at all. Come, there is the drum striking up for Henri Quatre; be thankful it is no worse—to the right about, march, and God be with you!'

"'M. Bellegrade,' said I, in a fury, 'I want to marry your daughter!'

•

“‘Recapture the fort, then,’ replied he with a grin, ‘and elect yourself governor; for no less a man shall marry Monique.’

“‘I will do it,’ said I,—‘by heaven and hell! I will do it!’ and at the moment the noise without informed us that the gates had been opened. The bells rang, the artillery thundered, and the conquerors shouted, ‘Vive Henri Quatre!’

“I clasped Monique in my arms—she was pale, trembling, and in tears; and her father ran to the window to see the show.

“‘Monique,’ said I, ‘listen! Fail not every night of your life, if it should be for twelve months, to walk out upon the ramparts, which are close by, before going to bed. As often as you see a light on the mast-head of a boat below, you may be sure that your lover is there, and that his hopes are still alive. When you see two lights, provide yourself, at your leisure, with a cord long enough to reach the distant waters below; and when you see three, let fall the end of the cord at the place where the rock sweeps perpendicularly down six hundred feet to the sea—will you do this?’

“‘I will.’

“‘The message you will receive by the cord will explain the rest. Now, farewell!’

“This, your Majesty,” continued Boisrosé, “is the way in which I came first to think of an enterprise which the world is pleased to repute so extraordinary.”

“A very proper and sensible way, I declare,” said the beautiful Gabrielle—“only, I wish you had given us the adventure first, which I am dying to hear, and kept the preface against winter.”

“It was M. Rosny’s fault,” cried Boisrosé, starting up, and reddening.—“Plague on him! he told me to give my motives in full, when you and his Majesty were not listening! This was done on purpose—O the—well, if I do not one time or other—*Sacré Dieu!*” Henri and his minister laughed heartily at the young sailor’s naïveté; and Gabrielle laughed as much as a beauty dares do with the fear of wrinkles before her eyes.

“Never mind,” said the debonair King, “dulness is not capital: sit down, again, and tell us the story of your three lights.”

CHAPTER II.

By Heaven ! methinks it were an easy leap
 To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,
 Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
 Where never fathom-line could touch the ground,
 And pluck up drowned honour by the locks !

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the defence of the fort," continued Boisroßé, "I had formed an intimacy with about a score of the finest fellows it contained. They were all of the true breed—not a shilly-shallyer amongst them ; and every one was as poor as your Majesty yourself when only King of Navarre, at the time you had not a whole shirt, nor a whole doublet, nor even a serviceable suit of armour to your back. With these gentlemen, as soon as I had established my mother with a relation, I held a council of war about recapturing the fort.

" 'Sirs,' said I, 'to make the attempt in the usual way, with any prospect of success, would require an army. It is necessary, therefore, if we think of it at all, to consider whether there is not some avenue which no human being would dream of but ourselves. The fort being built on the edge of a cliff, six hundred feet sheer down into the sea, has always been considered, and with much apparent reason, to be impregnable on that side : and it is precisely there where I would counsel the attempt to be made.'

" 'But how?' said they—'with wings?'

" 'Ay, of hemp,' replied I. 'Suppose you had a knotted rope let down to you from the ramparts, is there any man here who would decline ascending it for a reasonable wager? No, not one. Well, if at my own expense I procure a tackle strong enough to hold us all, with thirty more picked men at our back—what would you say then to the adventure?'

" 'Do that, and we are yours !'

" 'What ! you are—are you? No thanks to you ! You would do as much, you rascals, to rob a crow's nest. • Come, I did but

try you ; the affair is all arranged ; I have friends in the garrison, and money in my pouch ; if you choose to join in the escalade, why, so—I shall be your true captain—if not, God be with you ! They all agreed to a man ; I chose one of them, whose name was André, for my lieutenant ; and, selling my patrimony, purchased a large open boat, and a coil of cable six hundred feet long.

“The affair, however, was by no means settled. My funds were exhausted ; thirty men were to be looked for, as fifty was the smallest number that would suffice to cut so many throats ; and it was necessary, therefore, to lie upon our oars, to see what God would send us. Both I and my comrades, therefore, were obliged to go adrift for the present, each of them engaging to meet me by a certain day, bringing a tried and true friend with him, worthy of a share in the adventure. The remaining ten I promised to pick up myself. What they did in the interval, I am sure I cannot very well tell ; and your Majesty and the Queen—I mean Mademoiselle D’Estrées—(that idea, I suppose, is given up)—must excuse me on this part of the subject. Some, however, I suppose, went a short trip to sea ; some took to the fishing ; and some, I dare say, lived as well as they could on their neighbours, who were, luckily, almost all heretics.”

“Oh fy, fy !” interrupted Gabrielle, but not in a tone of displeasure.

“What of that, Madame ?” said Boisrosé. “I am sure it was only the Protestants who suffered—scurvy knaves !—and it was even too good for them. Nay, you need not bend your brows at me, M. Rosny, for I do not offend his Majesty. I have ever observed, that people who change their religion are still bitterer against its professors than if they had been their enemies from the first.

“My Lieutenant, André, parted company with me last ; and previously we rowed out to the rock of the fort on a dark night, and for the first time, I gave the signal to Monique, by running a light up to the mast-head. Proud of the contrivance, I looked up, and saw the edge of the horizon faintly and

irregularly defined. It was impossible to discern a human figure at such a distance, and even the white flag planted on the highest part of the ramparts resembled more a patch of sky, or a sailing cloud, as it floated in the wind.

"I was so much annoyed on discovering the oversight I had been guilty of in omitting to establish a countersign with Monique, that André, imagining I had been struck with a panic at sight of the dark rock, and on the idea presenting itself of the terrific height we should have to swing ourselves up on a starless night by our hands and feet, and with no other support to cling to than a hempen line, began to try to animate my courage.

"'Peace,' said I,—'peace! Take care that I have not to put you in mind of this when we are halfway up, in order to egg you on to finish the adventure.' I then told him of the blunder I had committed—although still taking care not to allow him to suspect that my only ally in the garrison was a young timid girl—and we consulted as to the best mode of repairing it.

"Owing to the movements of the Leaguers, occasioned by the successes of your Majesty's arms in Normandy, the fort had been kept in a state of great alarm from the moment it had been won; and the same precautions were taken in admitting persons within the gates as if the place had been in a state of siege. It was necessary, therefore, that a communication with Monique should be made through some person as little liable to suspicion as possible; and André offered to employ on the occasion a young country girl in the neighbourhood, whose accepted lover he was. This seemed to me a fortunate thought. We extinguished our light, rowed back to the village, and the next morning set out for the place, about two leagues off, where André's sweetheart resided.

"The Lieutenant had already taken leave of her, intending that day to have proceeded on a coasting trip as far as Dieppe; and from thence, if he found a friend of his still in the port, for London, the capital of England; but the wind being unfavourable, he was permitted to defer his embarkation till the following day. After a pleasant walk, we reached the place of our desti-

ation early in the forenoon. It was a pretty village on the sea-shore, with a neat spire seen tapering through the trees, a few fishing-boats on the beach, and some small flocks of sheep spotting the circumjacent meadows white.

"Our way lay by the church ; and as we passed near the wall, surprised by the sound of singing, very different in measure and cadence from church music, being soft and tender, without any touch of solemnity, we paused to listen. In another moment, André recognised some of the voices, and we both leaped over the wall, for the singers had entered the church ; and presently all was silent. We looked in at one of the windows, and saw the prettiest sight that could be seen. About twenty young girls, dressed in white, and their heads coroneted with the early spring flowers, were sweeping with besoms of tender new-plucked shrubs the space before the altar. They were arranged in regular file, and kept time with their motions as if to some inaudible tune. In their hearts, I am sure they sung ; and if it was the priest who told them that God would have been displeased with the utterance of the tune by their lips, he lied like a knave !

"A young damsel, still prettier than the rest, was the queen of his maiden company ; and I saw by the direction of André's eyes, and the expression of his face, that she was his own. Having swept the fine dust into a heap in the middle, they deposited it in a white apron, which they delivered to Annette, their seeming priestess ; and then moving trippingly, as if they would have danced had they dared, and their feet falling softly, with nicely measured tread upon the floor, they slowly quitted the church.

"We were still unseen ; and, stealing by the side of the wall, we followed them till they had gained an eminence of smooth and delicate green, just without the enclosure of the church-yard, and sloping down to the edge of the sea ; where they drew up in regular array. The morning wind kissed merrily their fresh faces, and the long lappets of their caps waved and danced to its unseen touch. The sky was bright above their heads, the sea glittered at their feet, and the earth around them was as fair and green and fragrant, as if war had never entered into the world.

"The young girls dipped their hands into the apron ; and while their song rose clear into the sunny air—

' Goelands, Goelands,
Rammenez-nous nos amans !'

they scattered the holy dust upon the wind. I know not how it was, but the pretty superstition, clinging as it were for support to the blessed religion of the Cross, impressed me with a feeling of awe. These mysteries had been performed, to propitiate—they knew not what power, of Heaven or of earth—to send back to them their lovers, now tossing on the vasty sea ! Is it possible that God would appropriate to himself a worship so equivocal in its simplicity, and answer to their half Pagan spell ? I say, it is !

"No sooner had the charmed strain died away upon the wind, than André, rushing into the group, clasped his mistress in his



arms. A scream, and a leap, and a joyful laugh of surprise from the whole party, was the result. Annette grew pale at first, and red afterwards, and hid her blushes in her lover's bosom ; then her companions, plucking the garlands from their hair, flung the flowers playfully upon them both ; their song burst forth again from their hearts and lips, and joining hands, they danced to their own music round the happy pair.

"They were young," continued Boisrosé, in a lower voice—"young, heedless, happy creatures ! and they were all so beautiful,

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Rammenez nous nos amans !'

they scattered the holy dust upon the wind. I know not how it was, but the pretty superstition, clinging as it were for support to the blessed religion of the Cross, impressed me with a feeling of awe. These mysteries had been performed, to propitiate—they knew not what power, of Heaven or of earth—to send back to them their lovers, now tossing on the vasty sea ! Is it possible that God would appropriate to himself a worship so equivocal in its simplicity, and answer to their half Pagan spell ? I say, it is !

"No sooner had the charmed strain died away upon the wind, than André, rushing into the group, clasped his mistress in his



arms. A scream, and a leap, and a joyful laugh of surprise from the whole party, was the result. Annette grew pale at first, and red afterwards, and hid her blushes in her lover's bosom ; then her companions, plucking the garlands from their hair, flung the flowers playfully upon them both ; their song burst forth again from their hearts and lips, and joining hands, they danced to their own music round the happy pair.

"They were young," continued Boisrosé, in a lower voice—"young, heedless, happy creatures ! and they were all so beautiful,

and they looked so innocent—I pray your Majesty to like these poor girls!”

“And so I do,” said the good Henri—“so I do indeed, my fine fellow!”

“And you, beautiful Gabrielle?” Gabrielle suddenly, yet gently, removed Henri’s hand from her shoulder, on which he was reclining, and leaning her face upon the arm of the sofa, burst into tears. The monarch sighed, and Boisrosé looked as if he had been taken in the fact of some enormous crime.

“Go on,” said the Marquis of Rosny, while the unloving look with which he usually regarded the future Duchess of Beaufort, softened into a smile of compassion.

“Annette, may it please Madame and your Majesty,” said Boisrosé, “was easily prevailed upon to lend herself to our views; and that same day, providing herself with a little basket of fresh eggs, she mounted upon an ass, and, escorted by us, took her way to the fort. Her embassy was successfully performed; she delivered undiscovered a letter to Monique, and brought back to me a few hurried words, which were more powerful than whole volumes of magic.

“That night, we showed our signal again off the Rock of the Fort, consisting this time of *two* lights, as it was time that Monique should begin to prepare; and immediately after, to our great joy, we saw a small light above, which seemed to us more beautiful than a star. What it was owing to, I do not know; but the distance, as marked by the light, appeared to be greater than before. Perhaps it was the association in our fancies between this star of our hope and the stars of heaven—for it truly seemed, as we gazed upon the speck of brilliance gemming the crown of night, that our project was to scale the sky itself, and take the Thunderer by surprise. I felt convinced at the moment, from my companion’s manner, and the tone of his voice, that a thrill of awe passed through his heart; nevertheless, he mastered his emotion very gallantly, and in rowing home, we talked of the enterprise as serenely as usual.

“The next day, André and I parted: he went to Dieppe; and

I, after seeing my boat properly secured, being reduced to my last sol, sailed for Bordeaux as a man before the mast. The story has nothing to do with the attempt upon the fort; but perhaps your Majesty, now that I am talking, at any rate, would like to hear my adventures at sea?"

"By no means!" interposed Gabrielle.

"Very well. On the appointed day, my comrades and I met according to promise. We had all been successful in finding recruits, so that the proper number of fifty was made up, and it was necessary, without more loss of time, to go to work. They were a set of fellows that could not have been matched in Europe for nerve and muscle. Their faces were almost all of the greyish-brown, which speaks of rough weather and sea-spray; their eyes were small, quick, and sharp; they were under rather than over the middle size, and they stooped a little, like men who were in the habit of clutching and grappling. There were some exceptions, it is true, to this description, and among them was André. He was tall and elegantly, rather than strongly proportioned, and was quite a stripling compared with the majority of the rest. I had chosen him for my lieutenant from the frankness and boldness of his air, and a certain enthusiasm in his bright eyes which proclaimed him the very man for such an enterprise. André besides could understand me: this is a quality which your Majesty is doubtless well able to appreciate. It is an excellent thing to have people about one who can do well what they are bidden wisely; but the benefit is incalculable to the chief of any daring enterprise, to possess a comrade capable of entering into his feelings, and to whom a hinted word is sufficient to awaken a train of ideas corresponding to his own. Such a comrade was André.

"Having exchanged signals with my watchful angel Monique, who was still true to her post, a night was fixed upon for the adventure. The night came.

"The weather for some time had been dull and gloomy during the day, and squally as the night set in. It was early in the moon; and the sky was covered with clouds, which, although brittle and restless, allowed not a twinkle of starlight to appear. The shore-

ward sea rolled in heavy and almost unbroken masses, although the white foam was dimly visible in the offing. We embarked at a point half a league from the village; each man wearing a helmet and a coat of mail, with his offensive arms, consisting of a sword, dagger, and battle-axe, strapped round his body.

"Before we reached the Rock of the Fort, the wind had considerably increased, so that it was dangerous to go too far in-shore. Our signal light, however, would have been an object of great surprise and alarm, if seen by any of the garrison; and it was necessary to revert to our original intention. So, at all events, we should have been obliged to do very soon, as we all knew; and I only mention it to account for the kind of awe which, on nearing the rocks, ran through my crew.

This was owing to nothing more nor less than the noise of the waves, as they broke sullenly upon the cliff. Farther out, the sound was bad enough, but it was referred by the sailor's experience to its natural causes—and perhaps might have been rather encouraging than otherwise, as forming part of the things of which he was professionally cognoscent. But when close by—muttered as it were into our ears—it was as dismal as can well be conceived. The fissures and unevennesses of the rock gave it many of the intonations of the human voice, while in itself—the body, if I may so speak, of the sound—it was so altogether above, or perhaps beneath humanity, as to be absolutely appalling.

"I believe there was not one among us who did not feel this, but I also believe that had it not been for the imprudence of my lieutenant, André, we should all have been too much ashamed of the sensation to have allowed it to be suspected even in our silence. When we first plunged close upon the cliff, and dipped our oars deep into the water to arrest the boat's progress, André, who all on a sudden had leisure to listen, stunned and horror-struck by the hellish clamour that assailed his ears, cried out—

"*'Holy Saints! what is that?'* and we, who wanted only an excuse to listen also, gave up our minds so entirely to the task, that it was some time before we even thought of running up our signal-light to the mast-head.

"André, notwithstanding, was one of the first to recover, and by his brisk and cheerful whispers—for although the distance was so great, we did not think it prudent to talk above our breath—contributed greatly to restore the self-possession of the crew. In the meantime, in the deadly shade of the cliff, the darkness became so great that we could hardly see the figure of one another; and above, the rock was scarcely distinguishable from the dull sky beyond. The wind veered a little, but always for the worse, and gradually increased in force, till at length it came on to blow great guns from the north-west.

"Having struck fire with a flint-and-steel we at last lighted our lamp, and sent it dancing up to the mast-head. It enabled us to look into one another's faces for a moment; but when it had passed higher than our heads, the effect was completely lost in the surrounding gloom—its beams did not even carry to the wall of rock, which, at the present moment, was our most dreaded enemy. Every face was turned up in expectation. The ridge of the cliff • was now invisible; and for some moments—I know not whether I ought to say moments or minutes—we were in doubt whether any countersign was to appear.

"At length the star of our destiny arose in the heavens. I shall never forget the sound which came from the hearts of my comrades at its sudden apparition. The light appeared to be fixed in the sky, while we were grovelling on the surface of the sea. It happened at the moment that there was a pause in the rising storm; and, notwithstanding the inarticulate roar of the waters, I am convinced that the slightest sigh from our lips would have been • heard from stem to stern.

"Our second and then our third light was run up in the same manner, but still the solitary signal twinkled above. Expecting that a reply should be made to each of my challenges, I was greatly discomfited; and, although I allowed no hint of it to escape, it was at one time my firm belief that something had occurred above to prevent the descent of the cord. But how did I know that the cord had not already descended? As the question flashed suddenly upon me I was covered with a cold perspiration.

An object fifty times the thickness of an ordinary cord would scarcely have been discernible at the time !

"This oversight of mine, however, was made up for by my admirable Monique. In a few moments the star above began to fall ; its descent became more rapid ; it swung wildly in the wind ; and at length it almost reached the water's edge before us. It was with some damage to our boat, and extreme hazard to our lives, that we approached near enough ; but at length we had the satisfaction of seizing the welcome cord.

"To this the end of the cable was speedily made fast, and a pause of expectation ensued. The cable was furnished with small pieces of wood lashed across it at equal distances, to serve for the steps of a ladder ; and the whole was coiled carefully up and laid free upon the beams of the boat, so as to run easily. The vessel was now so crowded both at stern and bows, all requiring to be clear at midships, that we could scarcely use the oars to keep our position in the water ; and as the wind increased every instant, and the sea rose higher and rougher upon the rocks, the moment was exceedingly critical.

"The cable at last began to rise, and my heart was relieved, for I feared that Monique had found her strength unequal to the task ; as indeed it would have been, without the aid of an old wheel which had been used in weighing stones for the repair of the ramparts. I knew that she would meet with no interruption in her labour, for this part of the fort was wholly deserted even in the daytime ; and little danger could be apprehended by the garrison in such a quarter, except from an insurrection of the eagles. My mind was therefore perfectly tranquil from the moment the cable began to rise ; and, whispering my orders to the men, we set about what remained of our duty in the boat with alacrity.

"Uncoiling a sufficient quantity of the cable to keep our friend above employed, we threw it overboard, and then pulled out a little farther from the rocks, to allow room for dragging, and cast anchor. Our anchor was heavy enough for a much larger vessel in an ordinary situation ; but here the ground was bad, the wind

high, and the sea by this time roaring and hissing, and plunging like mad. The noise with which it met the cliff was like incessant discharges of artillery; and the waves broke so continually over our heads, that the air we breathed seemed to be thick with foam.

"In this situation we remained, I think, for upwards of an hour, before we saw that the rope was nearly all spun out. At length the hoisting ceased; the labour of Monique was at a close; and we lashed the cable's end securely to the boat. All things went bravely on; we had hit our time to a minute; the sky was covered with a pall, the ends of which seemed to hang far over the horizon of the earth; the winds piped loud and wild, and the answering sea danced and shouted to the sound; there was not a twinkle of starlight above, and below there were only the white heads of the billows seen dim and far in the waste. It was now the dead watch, and deep middle of the night.

"We followed the rope with our eye towards our destination, but it was lost in darkness. We could not even see the edge of the cliff against the sky. At length a light appeared like a star, far, far above our heads: it was the signal that all was ready, and we eagerly threw ourselves upon the rope to try, by a strain, whether it was securely enough fastened above. It did not yield.

"'Now, my lads,' cried I—'now for the crow's nest! André, my noble heart! you shall lead the way; and although I doubt no man of you, any more than I doubt the mass, yet I myself will bring up the rear. There must be no return, once our feet have left the boat! Remember, I require no compulsion even now: stay below whoever pleases; but if you mount, you shall never descend this way alive. Whatever difficulties we may meet with on the way, or whatever alarm we may hear above, on we must go. This dagger sharpened on purpose, I shall carry in my mouth, to cut the rope below me on the first murmur of mutiny. Are you all agreed?'"

"'Ay, ay, ay!' was the answer from every hero of them. The winds, waves, and rocks shouted their applause; and the sea, rising wildly around us, broke in a deluge over our heads.

“ ‘Now for it, my lads !’ cried André, in the midst of the din— ‘Follow who will, here I go like a rigger !’ and he sprang upon the rope, and disappeared in the darkness above. Up they jumped behind him, one after another, head and shoulders. *Sacré !* it would have done your Majesty’s heart good to have seen it ! Up they jumped—the rope swung, the sea roared—hurrah ! I sheathed my dagger, for I saw there would be no use for it ; and, drunken with exultation, as the last man left the gun-wale, I almost leaped upon his shoulders.

“We had gained the middle, three hundred yards from the surface of the sea, and three hundred yards from the surface of the land. We were in total darkness ; and the rope, notwithstanding our enormous weight, agitated by the rocking of the boat, and the rushing of the storm, swung and swayed like a thread.

“ ‘Hold fast !’ cried the lieutenant at that moment—but there was no need of the command. We had all stopped suddenly, as if we had been one man, and clung with a death-grip to the rope. We knew not whether the danger—imminent, mortal, and overwhelming—was above or below ; but we felt as if we were lost. A hundred different ideas swept through my mind in one instant ; but the predominating one was that Monique had been discovered, and that the garrison were heaving off the rope above. I was confirmed in this belief by a wild and piercing voice screaming into my ears—it was the voice of Monique ! But this was impossible ! or, had they thrown her headlong down, shrieking into the abyss ?

“That I heard and felt all this in the compass of a few seconds may seem strange, and yet it is most true. The next moment, the motion of the rope which had produced these ideas was repeated, and a shudder seemed to run through it from end to end. It then swayed so wide and so high, being carried with the boat driving from her moorings on the top of an enormous wave, that it was with the utmost difficulty we kept our hold : and it then broke off from its lashings, with a report like that of a cannon, and we swung far and free in the storm.*

“Thrice we were flung with such violence against the cliff, that

* *Mémoires de Sully.*

many of our helmets crashed like nutshells; but at last, by desperate and continued efforts, grasping at the nearest fissures of the rock, we contrived to keep the frail machine comparatively steady. It was some time before we thought of resuming our progress; and there we hung, in the dead middle of the night, suspended three hundred feet above the roaring sea, supported by nothing more than a rope fastened three hundred feet above our heads by the weak fingers of a maid.

"I at last became impatient, and passed the word to go on; but the order was given in vain. Notwithstanding my threat of cutting the rope in case of mutiny, it seemed as if the very fact of the existence of a communication with the boat had had the effect of nerving the hearts of some of the men, which now failed them when that communication was cut off. André, the leader of the crew, he on whom I depended so much, sunk suddenly into a state of stupefaction and despair; and when I demanded furiously the cause of the delay, word was passed to me from mouth to mouth, that he had declared himself to be unable to proceed a step higher.

"The situation was terrible. The faint tones in which some of the men spoke informed me that the contagion was spreading; we should hang there—those who had nerve enough to preserve their hold—till daylight appeared; and, when discovered by the garrison, we should be dropped down into the hissing hell of waters, with the deriding and exulting cries of the victors ringing, like the laughter of demons, in our ears!

"'Wretch!' I exclaimed, 'it is better that one perish than all!' and, passing the word to hold fast, I climbed up the rope over the heads of my comrades. Each man, as I reached him, assured me, although some with faltering voices, that his resolution was unshaken, and that if I only cleared the way, he would follow me to the death; but when I arrived at André, he was immovable. His voice was fearfully calm, while he told me that he felt it impossible to go on—that he would remain there and die.

"'That you shall not,' said I; 'the lives of so many brave men shall not be sacrificed to the despair of a coward,' and

grappling with him fiercely, I tore his feeble hands from their hold, and bent him down over the abyss. I know not what withheld my arm, as I was about to send him headlong into the sea; but I believe it was the remembrance of that gentle scene I had witnessed with him at the village church. I can hardly understand it now; but at that moment, even amidst the howling of the night tempest, I heard the maidens' voices, in their sweet wild song, swell distinctly on my ear, and the innocent face of his young fair mistress gleamed upon me like a spirit through the darkness.

"My heart was softened, but my tongue bitter. I raised him up, and fixed his hands again upon the rope; and, with every execration that hate and scorn could teach the human lips, I stabbed him repeatedly, but not deeply, in the legs and back with my dagger. The sense of pain roused him to the sense of insult; and at length, as I repeated my attacks, his fear vanished, and grasping the rope with one hand, he tugged at his sword with the other to combat his enemy on the spot.

"*'I will meet you on the ramparts,'* said I, sliding down the backs of my comrades to my original post.

"*'On! on!'* cried they, with one voice; *'the day breaks!—on, or we are lost!'* and André rushed frantically up the trembling ladder.

"We at length gained the edge of the precipice, and crept one by one upon the ramparts. That moment was delightful! we unbound our swords and battle-axes, and my comrades gathered round me to take orders for the assault. Monique at the instant startled us by bursting into the circle. She sunk down before me, and clasped my knees.

"*'They are asleep!'* said she, in a whisper that was heard distinctly by all present—*'they are sound asleep—calm and unsuspecting on their peaceful beds! Oh, spare them! spare them!'*—But we did not spare them!"

"Wretch!" cried Gabrielle, "after having just escaped such danger yourselves!"

"That was just the reason," returned Boisrosé; "we had no

fancy to be hurled down the cliff again ; the numbers were three to one against us ; and before we had nearly reduced them to an equality, so many had time to rub their eyes and arm, that, after all, we had a fair stand-up fight for the fort, which we gained—besides, they were Protestants.”

“Thank Heaven !” exclaimed Gabrielle, “that you have come to an end one way or other. I am sure, I wished heartily that the rope had broken above rather than below you ; for I thought you never meant to have got more than halfway ; and certes, if I had gone to bed, with my imagination hanging with you on that eternal line, the storm shrieking in my ears, and the sea roaring at my feet, I should have risen in the morning mad ! Now tell me, out of what stale romance have you filched that adventure ?”

“It is all true, Madame,” said the Marquis of Rosny—“true, every syllable, as I have had an opportunity of knowing. If ever I write the history of my own time, I shall not forget, be assured, the story of the Rock of the Fort.”*

• “But tell me,” said Henri, “for I long to know, how you sped after the fortress was taken ?”

“Why, your Majesty,” replied Boisrosé, “as soon as the affair was settled, I elected myself Governor of Feschamp, and sent an offer to Admiral Villars to deliver up the fort to the League, on the simple condition of my being permitted to retain the government. I then went to M. Bellegrade to ask his daughter in marriage. What do you think the old fellow answered ?”

“I am sure I cannot tell,” said the Monarch.

“I know that—but guess.”

• “Indeed I cannot.”

“Why then, he said, that as your Majesty had turned your coat to get at the throne, it was yours by right ; and that, without the royal permission, I could be no more governor than he ! Think of that ! That I, who had scaled a perpendicular cliff six hundred feet high, and carried the fort with my own men, should wait *your* permission to govern it ! Sacré !”

* Nor did he.—See *Memoires de Sully*.

"It was a most unreasonable idea !" remarked Gabrielle gravely.

"Shocking ! shocking !" said the King. The Marquis of Rosny grinned from ear to ear.

"Well," returned Boisrosé, "M. Bellegrade was inflexible, and Villars played the fool. Instead of snapping at the offer at once, the Admiral went a roundabout way to work, employing some of his underlings to negotiate ; and when I flatly refused to deliver up the fort before the bargain was made, he marched an army against me ! This, as it happened, was very well ; for, out of affection to your Majesty, I had already half persuaded myself that as the Church had opened her arms to receive an erring and repentant son, a sinner like me had no right to stand in his way. No sooner, therefore, did I hear of the Admiral's movement, than I sent the same offer to your Majesty which I had made to him ; and presently there comes Marshal Biron, swelling, and strutting, and puffing as if he would blow out the sun, and wheedles me out of my fort. Never was a freer man ! If I had asked for the succession of the throne of France, he would have given it at a word. But, alas ! his gifts were all in words ! With the concurrence of M. Bellegrade, the bargain I made with him was, that I should either receive the government of Feschamp, or an adequate remuneration. From that day to this, I have heard nothing more about the matter, either from Biron or your Majesty."

"And whom do you accuse?" asked the King.

"Why, that M. Rosny," replied Boisrosé, "people say, makes your Majesty do anything he has a mind to—or let it alone, just as he pleases ; and as I was always inclined to form a favourable opinion of your Majesty, I of course am compelled to conclude that it is owing to his evil influence you act on this point in so strange a manner."

"We shall waive that point in the meantime," said the King ; "and now, let me ask you, why you have all on a sudden ceased mention of your friend André?"

"Sacré ! I hardly know what to say of André. After the fort was taken, he wanted to fight with me for stabbing him ; and when

I only told him he was a fool, he went away in a dudgeon, and I neither saw nor heard anything more of him."

"This is your account, sir," said the King sternly; "will you preserve the assurance of your countenance, when you are informed that André has been here before you?"

"Oh, the son of a sea-cow! what has he been saying? Do not believe him, please your Majesty! his mother was a Protestant! O that I had him here!"

"And so you shall—you shall not be condemned without witnesses and a full hearing. Keep yourself in readiness to return here when sent for; and I pledge my word, as a King and a Knight, that you shall have justice done you."

Boisrosé left the presence devoured with rage and mortification.

"If I had thought it," said he, with a bitter oath, "I would have been flayed alive before they had that long yarn out of me!"

Five days passed by, and he was at his wits' end, as well as his purse's end; but at last the message came, and he hurried to the Louvre.

He was ushered into the same room, where he found the same company; and, after making his obeisance to royalty, he looked fiercely round for the accusing witness. In another moment André entered.

"Silence in the court!" bawled the Marquis de Rosny.

"Please your Majesty, stop his mouth!" said Boisrosé; and striding up to André, who seemed about to faint away in the august presence—

"Sacré!" he continued, "what is this you have been saying of me? Look me in the face, and out with it!"

"I never said anything of you, Boisrosé," replied André, "that was not true."

"What *did* you say of me then—speak!"

"Why, I only said that you would not fight with me."

"And was that all?"

"That was the worst I knew of you to say—and the only thing of the kind that was ever said of you in your life."

"Please your Majesty," said Boisrosé, "his mother recanted

before her death ! I will go to communion upon it. André, my fine fellow, I'll fight with you to-morrow ; or, if that will not do, I beg your pardon now !"

"The next witness !" bawled the Marquis de Rosny ; and M. Bellegrade entered the room.

"Report your accusation against the prisoner," said the Marquis.

"My accusation ! Holy Virgin ! I am sure I do not remember that I——"

"No hesitation—you know it was something about defending the fort."

"Well, I am sure I meant no harm to the young man ; but if I did say anything, it must have been, that he declared to me, if made Governor of the fort, he would defend it against his Majesty's enemies, if the King himself were to lead them on."

"That is hanging," said Gabrielle. Boisrosé gave her a look : but he bit his lip and remained silent, for he could not deny the charge.

"The next witness !" An old lady entered the room.

"What, mother ! you here !" cried Boisrosé. "What, in Heaven's name ! have you been saying against me ?"

"Indeed, I could not help it !" said she ; "the gentleman asked me so many questions, and pressed me so hard, that at last I told him——"

"What, what ?"

"That, when preparing for your mad adventure, rather than hamper me by living on the part of your small patrimony which you had settled on me, you barbarously went a voyage to Bordeaux as a man before the mast !" and the widow sobbed bitterly.

"The next witness." Annette entered the room.

"What is the heaviest complaint you have to make against the prisoner Boisrosé ?"

"Please you, sir, that when I told him Mademoiselle de Bellegrade had saluted me when I gave her the letter, he broke all my eggs to pieces, in taking the kiss off my cheek."

"The last witness !" Monique entered the room ; and Boisrosé ran and clasped her in his arms.

"Your complaint ! your complaint !" cried the King.

"This is his way," said Monique, struggling ; "you are witness as well as I—he always so stops my breath !" Gabrielle clapped her hands, delighted at the damsel's readiness, and Henri rose up.

"Prisoner," said he, "you are convicted of valour, generosity, true loyalty, filial affection, and love ; and I remit you into the hands of the Marquis of Rosny for sentence."

"With your Majesty's permission, then," cried the Marquis, "he shall for these offences receive two thousand crowns in ready money, a captaincy in the army, with proper appointments, and a pension of twelve thousand livres a year ; and when your Majesty makes me grand master of the Norman artillery, he will be, if he pleases, my lieutenant-general,* with André the next in command."

"But there is one fault, my Lord of Rosny," said Gabrielle, "common to both your officers, which I trust his Majesty will not overlook. They have quite too much spirit, particularly Boisrosé, for the quiet, holiday times which I hope, by the blessing of God, this realm is now to enjoy, and I would beg permission to propose a remedy."

"Name it," said the King.

"MARRIAGE !"

"You are right. My Lord of Rosny, see that it be instantly administered at our own charge. Let the entertainments be on a scale befitting our royal station ; and it will go hard with us, Gabrielle," continued Henri, whispering, "if you and I do not look in among the maskers."

Mémoires de Sully.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Seventeenth Century.

1600.—This century commenced with a confederacy among the nobles in favour of liberty ; that is to say, the liberty which nobles have usually fought for, which consists of their own independence of the King. The whole pith and sap, however, of the many-branched regime of feudality had long since gone to strengthen the central trunk of absolutism, and the affair was soon at an end. The conspiracy was decapitated with Marshal Biron, its ostensible head, and fell to the ground.

The recall of the Jesuits, at the solicitation of the Pope, followed ; and then the conspiracy of one of the King's mistresses, called D'Entragues, who had vexed, insulted, and abused him with impunity for many years.

At last, while Henry was arming against Austria, to conquer universal peace, and obtain the political philosopher's stone, he was assassinated, with remarkable adroitness, in one of the most public streets of his metropolis. It had been predicted long before that the day would be fatal to him. Was the deed the consequence of the prediction, or the cause of it? Henry IV. was a most amiable man. He wished that all his subjects should have a fowl in the pot on Sundays ; but in the meantime he seduced their wives, and condemned them to the galleys for killing rabbits. He was the first King of France who reduced despotism to a system ; and to this day he is almost as popular in the country as Napoleon himself.

1610.—Louis XIII. being only nine years of age, the kingdom was governed by an Italian called Concini, afterwards Marshal D'Ancre, and his wife, who ruled the regent queen-mother. Sully, the able minister of Henry IV., was turned away, and factions and conspiracies recalled. The States-General were convoked, for the last time till the Revolution, and debated upon the affairs of the clergy.

The King, galled by the yoke of his mother, was persuaded to have Concini assassinated ; and about the same time the wife of this adventurer was burnt for sorcery. The queen-mother was exiled, and revolted twice ; and the Calvinists were in frequent insurrection.

1624.—This was the epoch of the advent of Richelieu, who had been a

protégé of Concini. The King, feeble in soul, but strong in animal force, became a terrible instrument in the hands of this political magician. Richelieu struck first at the *grandeess*. He condemned several of them to death, and suppressed the high offices of Admiral and Constable. He then carried his arms against the Protestants, who wished, it is said, to establish a federative republic in France; and, after a year's resistance, levelled Rochelle, the grand citadel of the party, with the ground; and subdued Rohan, their commander-in-chief. Rousillon was conquered; the house of Austria humbled; Catalonia added to France; everything bent before the genius of the tyrant priest. Resistance within the kingdom was as vain as without. The Marshal de Marillon was executed; the Duke of Montmorenci, even after he obtained the King's pardon, shared the same fate; and Cinq-Mars and De Thou, at the head of whose conspiracy was Louis himself, tired of the yoke of his haughty minister, perished likewise on the scaffold. At last, Richelieu condescended to die in person; and the King, as usual, followed in his wake.

It must be added that the Cardinal nodded into being the French Academy; and that this learned body, proud of their origin, continued to play his apotheosis for a hundred and fifty years.

1643.—The next regent queen-mother—Louis XIV. being only five years old—was Anne of Austria; and Mazarin succeeded his patron, Richelieu, in the tyranny. He had less energy than his predecessor, but was infinitely cunning; and during the performance of his tricks the people were kept amused by the successful battles of Condé and Turenne. The former beat the Austrians at Rocroy and Friburg, and the latter was conqueror at Nordlingue and Dunkirk. Condé then gained the battle of Sens, and the war was terminated by the advantageous treaty of Westphalia.

The *grandeess* had now leisure to bestir themselves against Mazarin; they allied themselves to the Parliament, and commenced the civil war of the Fronde with *bons mots*. The citizens of Paris renewed the barricades, and supported the many against one—apparently from a common principle of policy; for, in reality, it was nothing to them who lost or won. Condé, too, detached himself from the court party, to which, however, Turenne remained faithful; and Mazarin, after some struggle, quitted France, but only to return immediately, escorted by seven thousand men. The Frondeurs allied themselves to the Spaniards, and the two parties came to blows in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The Duke of Orleans was made Lieutenant of the kingdom; Mazarin again retired, and the victorious Frondeurs laid down their arms. Mazarin, of course, immediately returned, and became more absolute than ever.

Condé had rejoined the Spaniards, and the war between them and Turenne continued for a long time, but was at last terminated by the treaty of the Pyrenees; France preserving Artois, Rousillon, and Alsace, and Louis XIV. marrying the *infanta* Maria Theresa.

Mazarin died ; and Louis XIV. began his reign with éclat. He had already gone into the chamber of Parliament, booted and spurred, with his hunting whip in his hand, to advise them not to meddle with affairs of state. Louis, however, had the sagacity to discern that no one can be a great king without having men of genius about him.

The finances were restored ; commerce and industry began to flourish ; literature was protected, and order introduced into the administration. The canal of Languedoc was constructed ; and a national navy created, fit to contend with those of England and Holland.

1668 —Louis then declared against Spain, to recover the imaginary rights of his queen, after her father's death ; and was beset by Holland, England, and Sweden, who came into the field as the allies of that country. He conquered Flanders, and Franche-Comté ; but by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle gave up the latter.

1673 —Louis fell out with Holland, and, having reduced its heretofore allies, carried an army of two hundred thousand men against that republic. He proposed the most insulting and ruinous conditions ; but in the meantime Admiral Ruyter beat the English and French fleets ; and when affairs had come to extremity, the brave Dutch broke up their dykes and laid the country under water to preserve their freedom.

Louis withdrew, but his pride was not humbled. It soon raised his neighbours up against him. He reconquered Franche-Comté ; Turenne burned the Palatinate ; Condé fought the battle of Senef, 1678, with the Dutch, in which twenty-five thousand men were killed ; Duquesne gained three naval victories in the Mediterranean ; and the peace of Nimeguen consolidated the victories of France.

1681 —The Stadtholder, invading in his turn, was repulsed by Marshal Luxembourg. Strasbourg was taken. Algiers was bombarded for insulting the French flag, and Genoa bombarded for assisting Algiers. Louis had gained the top of his arch of greatness, where he remained steady for a moment, to snuff up the adulation of the world, before beginning to descend. His palace of Versailles was the most magnificent in Europe ; his person was said to be a realization of the finest dreams of sculpture ; he was loved by the women, worshipped by the men, and wheedled by the Jesuits.

The glory of mere physical conquests was not enough for this French god ; he resolved to try his power also upon the human mind, and to extirpate heresy ! Missionaries and dragoons were sent into the Cevennes to convert and massacre ; the edict of Nantes was revoked 1685 ; churches were demolished ; and children stolen from their parents to be educated in the Catholic faith. Nearly a million of industrious citizens fled from their country, to enrich strangers with their labour, and bring up their sons in detestation of France.

1687.—The Prince of Orange entered into a league at Augsburg with a great part of Europe, against this monster of despotism. The Prince was

called to the throne under the name of William III. by the English, who had at last thrown off the despotic rule of the Stuart family ; and Louis, a kindred spirit in some respects, opened his arms to the discarded King. A tremendous war burst forth. Luxembourg beat over and over again the English King, and Catinat triumphed at Marseilles. On the other hand, Tourville lost fourteen vessels at La Hogue ; and at length a peace was concluded at Ryswick, the combatants on both sides being quite worn out. France was ruined. Money ! Money ! was the cry ; anything would have been sold for a consideration ; patents of nobility went at two thousand crowns apiece.

The seventeenth century is called the age of Louis XIV. ; and its character may be deduced from that of the King. He formed the age, as far as regarded France ; and when he said, " The state—that is I ! " the expression was by no means an extravagance. The people were taught to believe that their glory centered in an individual ; and thus the national spirit was extinguished. The splendour of the King attracted all eyes, and dazzled and blinded the gazers. Racine, Boileau, Molière, Corneille, Pascal, La Fontaine, Fénelon, La Bruyère, and other radiant names, threw the lustre of genius over this extraordinary reign. All the elements existed, bright, powerful, glorious, for making the seventeenth century the true age of reason—and it was only the age of LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH !





Dream-Girl.

It is not good for 'woman' to be alone.

GENESIS.

THERE is a certain valley in Languedoc, at no great distance from the palace of the Bishop of Mendes, where to this day the traveller is struck by some singular diversities of scenery. The valley itself is the most quiet and delightful that France can boast. A stream wanders through it, with just rapidity enough to

keep its waters sweet and clear ; and, on either side of this line of beauty, some gently swelling meadows extend, on one side to a chain of smooth green hills, and on the other, to the base of a mountain of almost inaccessible rocks. The river is bordered by willows and other shrubs, crowding to dip their branches in the transparent wave ; and here and there in its neighbourhood, groves of walnut trees stud the meadows, serving as a rendezvous of amusement for innumerable nightingales, which at the first dawn of summer assemble on the branches, and, as if in mockery of the poets, fill the evening air with their mirthful music.

Even now, the human population of the valley is not particularly abundant ; and he who chances to pass that way on his journey to the more celebrated scenes of travelling curiosity finds sometimes a little difficulty, no doubt to his great mortification and surprise, in obtaining all the luxuries which render London and Paris so agreeable. Two centuries ago, however, in the reign of Louis XIII., matters were still worse ; for there was then only one village in the whole area between hill and mountain, and that was a very small and a very poor one.

The village of Rossignol (so named probably on account of the abundance of nightingales in the neighbourhood) was inhabited by very poor, but very happy people. It is true that, in common with other cultivators of the fickle earth, they had sometimes to mourn the overthrow of the husbandman's hopes ; and that even their remote and lonely situation did not always protect them from the exactions of those whom birth, violence, or accident had made the lords of the domain. But in such cases the villagers of Rossignol had a resource, limited indeed, and attended by hardship, and even danger, but, to a certain extent, absolutely unailing.

When M. de Thou, the excellent historian, travelled in this province about the time referred to, his imagination was greatly struck by the peculiarities of the occupation about to be described. The following (in his own words) is the simple way in which he first chanced to hear of it.

"In a journey," says he, "which I made into Languedoc, I

paid a visit to the Bishop of Mendes at his delightful seat in that province, who treated us at table rather with the magnificence of a nobleman than the simplicity of an ecclesiastic. We observed, however, that all the wild fowl wanted either a leg, a wing, or some other part.

“ ‘Why,’ cried the prelate good humouredly, ‘it does not look very elegant, indeed, but you must excuse the greediness of my caterer, who is always for having the first bit of what he brings.’ Upon being informed that his caterers were no other than eagles, we expressed a desire to be informed of the manner of their service, with which our friend accordingly complied

“The eagles build their nests in the cavity of some high, steep rock, and when the peasants discover the place, they erect a little hut at the foot of the precipice, where they may secure themselves from the weather, and watch till the birds fetch prey to their young. The moment these deposit the game in their nests, they fly off in quest of more, and the peasants, starting from their ambush, run up the rocks with astonishing agility, and carry away the prize, leaving some entrails of animals instead, that the nests may not be forsaken. In general, before the plunderers reach the nest, the old or young eagles have torn off some part of the bird or other animal, which is the reason why the Bishop’s luxuries appeared in so mutilated a state. The quality of the game, however, amply compensates for such defects, as the lord and lady eagle always choose the best the fen, forest, or hill affords”

The company at the Bishop’s table, however, little thought of the hazard with which their dainties were provided, and although sometimes, no doubt, in their sleep, they felt their brain whirl, and enjoyed the delightful sensation of falling down a precipice, it was more owing to indigestion than to a sympathy of imagination. The occupation, indeed, was looked upon as sport by the villagers themselves; but so also is tiger hunting, or any other dangerous amusement, in the quarter where it is practised, and at the date of our story, more than one childless mother was seen to tremble and turn pale with recollection, as the signal was

given for one of those expeditions of pleasure to the fatal mountain.

The presence of the young women, who usually accompanied their fathers or brothers, added greatly to the holiday character of the scene ; and, as on all other occasions the separation of the sexes was rigidly maintained, the time was chosen by love for his advances. In the midst of the small community, whose fields of grain did not extend many hundred yards round the village, it was next to impossible for the wooer to steal an opportunity for his soft tales, which the customs of the place forbade him to enjoy openly, but among the rocks and precipices of the gigantic mountain, all was liberty. The young girls opened the campaign by darting up the more accessible parts of the mountain, pursued by their lovers, and in searching for game it happened frequently that they found husbands. Sometimes the more high spirited would even emulate their lovers in climbing the loftiest precipices, and it was observed that those who were most noted for such feats of agility had usually the most perfect forms. This was caused, no doubt, by the play of the muscles assisting and developing more perfectly the plan of nature, but yet, when it was said truly, that the young men chose their sweethearts by their dexterity in the chase, it was not suspected that beauty, instead of success, was the charm.

When the party returned to the village, a public feast took place on the part of the spoils not destined for sale, and there the joke and the laugh went round, matches were counted as well as bruises ; and the hunters numbered, like the pheasants, by the brace.

It must not be supposed, however, that even in an Arcadia like this,

“The course of true love *always* did run smooth.”

There was one young girl, called Julie, who was cruel enough to have depopulated a whole nation of lovers. She was the most beautiful creature, it is said, that ever skimmed the surface of this breathing world. Her light brown hair was illumined in the bends

of the curls with gleams resembling those of auburn ; and it was so long and luxuriant that when, in the ardour of the chase, it became unbound, and floated in clouds around her, that seemed just touched on their golden summits by the sun, she looked more like a thing of air than of earth.

Nor was the illusion dissipated when, flinging away with her white arm the redundant tresses, her face flashed upon the gazer. There was nothing in it of that tinge of earth—for there is no word for the thought—which identifies the loveliest and happiest faces with mortality. There was no shade of care upon her dazzling brow—no touch of tender thought upon her lip—no flash, even of hope, in her radiant eyes. Her expression spoke neither of the past nor the future—neither of graves nor altars. She was a thing of mere physical life—a gay and glorious creature of the sun, and the wind, and the dews ; who exchanged as carelessly and unconsciously as a flower, the sweetness of her beauty for the bounties of nature, and pierced the ear of heaven with her mirthful songs from nothing higher than the instinct of a bird.

It seemed as if what was absent in her mind had been added to her physical nature. She had the same excess of animal life which is observed in young children ; but, unlike them, her muscular force was great enough to give it play. Her walk was like a bounding dance, and her common speech like a gay and sparkling song : her laugh echoed from hill to hill, like the tone of some sweet but wild and shrill instrument of music. She outstripped the boldest of the youths in the chase ; skimmed like some phantom shape along the edge of precipices approached even by the wild goat with fear ; and looked round with careless joy, from pinnacles which interrupted the flight of the eagle through the air.

With such beauty, and such accomplishments, for the place and time, how many hearts might not Julie have broken ! Julie did not break one. She was admired, loved, followed ; and she fled, rending the air with her shrieks and musical laughter. Disconcerted, stunned, mortified, and alarmed, the wooer pursued his mistress only with his eyes, and blessed the saints that he had not gained such a phantom for a wife.

A year before, there had been one youth of the village, who was able to keep pace with Julie, nay to outstrip her, at least towards the close of the day, when even her strength began to fail. Antoine, in addition to being the best and boldest huntsman, was out of all question the handsomest young fellow in the valley of Rossignol; and no human being doubted that it was he who was destined to conquer the love of Julie. Antoine strove very hard, he broke his leg once, and risked his neck a hundred times; but all in vain. Julie continued to laugh and to fly, and when overtaken, she only laughed the louder. Antoine at length saw that she had no soul, his spirit was roused, he tried to banish her idea from his mind, and finding his efforts unavailing, he bade adieu to his kinsmen and comrades, and with a heavy heart but a firm step, he left the village whistling a march.

The world beyond the valley was not exactly such as had been presented to the dreams of Antoine. Everywhere the herald was going about proclaiming war,* and priests and ambassadors, the ministers of temporal and eternal peace, carried fire and sword through Europe, at the head of armies. The roads were almost impassable, and infested by troops of robbers. In Paris itself, which Antoine visited in the course of his adventures, he found with astonishment that the streets were narrow, badly paved, choked up with filth, and swarming with thieves. The city watch was composed of forty-five men, who only added to the danger and disturbance.

Everywhere was seen dissatisfaction and commotion. The parishes of the metropolis fought with each other, and religious processions, in passing, came to blows for the honour of their respective banners. The canons of different establishments were seen frequently engaged hand to hand, and on the very day that Louis XIII. solemnly put his kingdom under the protection of the most Holy Virgin, the Parliament and Chamber of Accounts fought bitterly for precedence in the Church of Nôtre Dame. The public corporations throughout the kingdom were in arms; and

* Louis XIII. was the last who observed this custom.

Antoine could not move a hundred yards without being the spectator of a duel.

Astrologers were going about selling predictions ; and the more misfortune they foretold, the greater price was paid for them. The evil eye darted its fatal fascinations at every step ; and the whirr of witches troubled the air. The incantations of priests driving out devils mingled with the shrieks of the possessed. Fires blazed in which sorcerers expiated their unspeakable crimes ; and demons buzzed round the flames in the shape of blue-bottle flies, to carry off the souls of the victims to a still hotter hell.* Among the Catholics, religion was a debasing and ludicrous superstition, intermingled with horrible debaucheries ; and among the Protestants, a lifeless and soulless form, brutalised by the stern ferocity of the zealots.†

Disgusted and alarmed, Antoine sought again his quiet valley of Languedoc. He had been a soldier. He had burned villages, and sacked towns ; flushed with success, he had feasted in the conquering camp ; and naked, helpless and alone, he had fled through the enemy's country. He had seen women in every stage of their condition, from the captive maid kneeling for mercy at the victor's feet, to the triumphant queen dispensing death or honours by a signal of her white hand, or a flash of her royal eye. Handsome himself, brave and adventurous, he had been the mark of many a lightning glance ; he had trifled in the assemblies of the fair, and talked and dreamed of love in the evening bower. But never, in all his wanderings, had he seen a girl like Julie. Never amidst the roving of his truant eye, or the vows of his plastic lip, or the enchanted dreams of his vain and ambitious

* It was not difficult to obtain the reputation of sorcery. A man was tried for teaching a horse some tricks, such as we see at country fairs ; they wanted to burn both horse and man. At the *Auto da Fe* of the magician Grandier, a fly buzzing round the miserable wretch was pointed out to the spectators by a monk, as the devil come to carry away the soul of the criminal.

† Voltaire complains, in a manner highly characteristic of that coxcomb of philosophers, that in this state of society there were no coterics—no academies.

heart, had he ever forgotten the magic of a smile, which, although colder than ice in itself, had set his soul on fire.

Julie lived within him, no more a beauteous image that, like the sculptor of the antique world, he had wept to find so lifeless and so cold. She was a thing of life, and breath, and heart, and soul. Her beauty was of the true mortal stuff, composed of smiles, and tears, and hopes, and wishes, and regrets. She was a being to be loved, not as we love a picture, on account of the art of its design and the glory of its colouring, but by the eternal enchantment of sympathy.

How this metamorphosis had been produced on the portrait which he had carried abroad with him in his stripling heart, it would be vain to inquire. The mind, however, is never at rest; nor, any more than the body, does it permit what it imbibes, or swallows, to be so. The idea as well as the substance, acted upon by the powers of nature, soon changes its form, and is turned into food—or poison.

Antoine arrived in the valley of Rossignol at the same season of the year in which he had quitted it; and so little appearance of change did he observe, that in winding through the knots of willows by the side of the stream, in his approach to the houses, he was almost tempted to doubt whether his absence had been anything more than a dream. His reception, however, by the villagers soon convinced him of the reality of his travels. News was eagerly demanded of the world, but he could tell little to interest or satisfy them. They were still busy with the conspiracy of Marshal Biron under Henri IV., and debated fiercely upon the terms of the promise of marriage given by that prince to Mademoiselle d'Entragues. They thought that the mayor of Paris was the author of all the disturbances in the kingdom, and that Cardinal Richelieu was persecuted by the Protestants for his religious opinions. Antoine at last, so great was the majority against him, was ashamed of his ignorance, and wished that he had never left the valley of Rossignol, where they knew so much better what was done in the world than they who had been in the world themselves.

But Julie! She was a year older. Her voice had sunk about the millionth part of a tone; her eyes were more intensely blue; her figure was rounded into a mould that made Antoine ask indignantly how he could have imagined her former beauty to be perfection. Was she still as coldly lovely? The village said, Yes; but Antoine swore a great oath to himself—No. The attributes of his ideal Julie he so lavishly bestowed upon the original, that the two were inextricably blended in his imagination. Her very scorn had something of tenderness to his love-sick mind; her wild laugh made his heart quake and tremble, like the atmosphere in which it sounded; and the flash of her sunny eye fired his thoughts in such a manner, that, as if there had been trains of powder, the young soldier sometimes ran into the woods, to leave, if possible, himself behind, and avoid the explosion.

In the meantime a day was appointed for an expedition to the black mountain. The interval was passed in jeers directed at Antoine, who was supposed, from long disuse, to be incapable of engaging with his former vigour and adroitness in the sport. The anticipated triumph of Julie was painted to him in terms of bitter mockery, and various young girls, who had budded into beauty since his departure, were pointed out as proper substitutes for her who would only be wooed by the wind, and return a love as cold and unsubstantial.

When the day came, the party assembled to the number of twenty, nearly half of whom were handsome young girls, all in their holiday costume. They were escorted out of the village, according to immemorial custom, by a tribe of little children, screaming benedictions, and scattering flowers; and when they had gained a huge oak tree near the entrance, each one pulled a branch; and the women ranging themselves two by two in the van, while the men followed in the same order, the whole set forth singing a hymn in parts, and keeping time with their feet, and waving their oak branches to the music.

It was not long before they entered into the cold shadow of the mountain, "floating many a rood" upon their path. There was a savage grandeur in the scene before them, which for a time awed

even the hearts accustomed to it from infancy. This remarkable range of mountains is formed for the most part of granite rocks, of which the scanty vegetation affords subsistence to no animal except the wild goat. So irregular are these masses of cliff, that at several points of the view the traveller fancies he sees before him some gigantic city of the desert, with chimneys, domes, and spires rising in the midst. On nearer approach, the objects of his wonder change into ridges of rocks and pinnacles, so bare and lofty that he shudders to scale them even in imagination. Towards the summit of the mountain, the majestic dimensions of the scene exceed conception. Frightful chasms seem to split asunder the entire ridge; and the stranger, leaning over the precipice, puts back the damp hair from his eyes, to gaze upon the horrid secrets of subterranean nature.

Such was the scene of the villagers' *recreation*. A considerable part of the forenoon was spent in repairing their huts along the base of the cliffs, which a storm, since their last visit, had almost destroyed; and the first part of the adventure, in which the females always joined, commenced. This consisted of a general rummage of the more accessible parts of the mountain; during which the young girls tried their speed with each other, or, putting themselves under the guidance of their lovers, were led into clefts and obscurities from whence their escape could only be purchased by confession.

On this occasion, the hunters kept more in a body than was customary; for, although each had his individual interest to attend to, all were curious to know how Antoine would speed with his fantastic mistress. Julie's spirits had risen to a point which it was never imagined that even they could attain. Her laugh echoed so far and wildly among the rocks, that the startled listeners looked round to see whether some assistants had not risen from the fissures of the cliff, to sustain and repeat the almost unearthly sound; her cheeks swelled with beauty; her figure seemed to dilate; and her dancing eyes flashed sparks of light, as she waited on tiptoe the signal to start. Her companions looked at her with wonder and admiration; but the oldest man of the party, the same

who was to give the signal, was seen to regard her with a strange expression of concern.

"Antoine," said he aside, "look to Julie to-day! There is that in her eyes which bodes no good. I never saw the expression but once before; yet I cannot mistake it. Do you not see it—that dark spot, or look, or whatever it might be, that sits in the midst of light and glory? Follow close, but do not pass her, lest you tempt her into danger: above all things tarry not late, for this day, fair as it seems, will close in thunder and storm. Now, my children," continued the old man aloud, "God speed you all! Luck to the boldest, and love to the fairest! Away! away! away!"

And away they flew, like a herd of wild deer before the hunters at the beginning of the chase, when, conscious of their own fleetness, they toss their proud heads with joy and courage. Some were seen running up an almost perpendicular precipice, scarcely touching the lichens of the rock to assist their ascent; and then standing, with their heels on the dizzy summit, and bending down to jeer their slower companions below. Some caught their mistresses by the waist, as they were about to leap across a chasm, and held them threateningly over the gulf, till they bought their deliverance with a kiss. More timid woers contented themselves with luring the selected fair one to a distance from the crowd, where, with nothing more to scare them than the dead silence and solitude of nature, they might whisper their passion.

Julie was seen gliding up height after height, and skimming precipice after precipice, to the farthest ridge of the magnificent picture. Her shrill and musical laugh at last melted faintly on the ear, and she and her lover were observed, but so dimly, as to be scarcely discernible, near the summit of a pinnacle in the background. They were seated beside an eagle's nest, in which two young ones were lying, warmly cradled and asleep. Antoine sighed as he looked.

"Julie," said he softly, "what are you gazing at? There is not even a cloud in that fair blue sky to give you matter for a thought. Look here! Oh, Julie, how sweetly these little creatures are

sleeping ! Yet, asleep as they are, each knows that it is not alone. See, when I move one, the other awakes ! Even in sleep they feel the presence of each other ; and in the sensation there is comfort, and protection, and delight. How happy must be the life of an eagle ! how delicious his feelings, when, leaving the toilsome world behind, he sinks down into his nest of peace ! How sweetly must the curtains of darkness close around him, snugly housed in this little circle with the partner and pledges of his happiness ! The midnight wolf may stalk along the rocks and howl the moon, the storm may roar through his dreary and dread domain, but, unmoved by the din without, he will only enjoy more securely the calm within, and nestle closer to his young ones and his love !”

“It is he ! it is he !” exclaimed Julie. “Look where he comes, sailing proudly through the ocean of air ! Lord of the desert land ! dweller of the lonely rock ! happy indeed must be your lot !”

“Look, Julie ! the young creatures already feel his approach ; they are uneasy, they flap their bare wings, and open their mouths for the food he brings them. Does not he too feel that he is near them he loves ? and is not his heart stirred with sweet and tumultuous emotion, as he descries from afar his own eyrie in the cliffs ?”

“Ay, stirred,” cried Julie—“stirred to its inmost core ; but with pride and joy, and a fierce consciousness of majesty and might ! Look, he is alone—alone in the boundless air ! The earth is beneath his feet, with all its degrading ties of habit and necessity. He only thinks at this moment—if eagles think—that he is the sole inheritor of the space he surveys ; and he only feels that he is the lord and sovereign of *himself*—a right royal heritage !” Antoine sighed. The moment was unpropitious for his suit ; but this was her usual mood, and he could contain his passion no longer.

“Come,” cried Julie, starting up, as he was beginning to speak ; “children of earth as we are, we must not abide the approach of the lord of air. Oh, if I had a bow and arrow I would strike one blow for the love of honour before flying—if I thought it would not hurt him !”

"Julie," said Antoine, seizing her hand, "if we are children of the earth, why should we despise the instincts and affections that are the badge of our species? You shall not leave this spot till you hear me; for, if I do not speak, my heart will burst!"

"Speak on, then," said Julie, calmly; "what is it to be about?"

"About—about—" and the lover gasped—"Julie, I wish to speak to you about—love."

"Love!" and she laughed till the rocks rang with the music.

"Laugh on!" cried Antoine; "laugh on, but hear me. I have loved you, Julie, since I was a boy; I have thought of you by day and dreamed of you by night; I have fled from you in vain, for your image still pursued me; I have fought for gold, and won it, only to lay the spoil at your feet; I love you now, as I have loved you ever."

"And of what do you complain?" asked the maid. "Have I not always thought of you—the instant you came in sight? Have I not dreamed several times, when I had the nightmare, that you were a hound and I a hare? Have I not fled from you again and again; and did not you pursue me, not merely in idea but in fact, breaking once your arm, and many times almost your neck, in the race? I have not fought for gold, indeed, to lay at your feet, but I have climbed for pheasants and thrown them at your head. In short, I love you now just as I loved you ever. I love you as well, or almost as well, as I love that glorious bird, who looks as if he were about to swoop down upon us. Do try if you can hit him with a stone!" And the gay and heartless maiden sprang with another laugh down the cliff.

Even Julie was almost tired towards the close of the day; and she at length listened to the entreaties of Antoine, and consented to return and rejoin the party at the common rendezvous. They were now on a part of the range of mountains where even the foot of the daring peasants seldom trod, owing to its difficulty of access. It was a tabular rock, at a considerable elevation above the others; and the sides of which, except at one particular point, were absolutely perpendicular for several hundred feet from the top, and so smooth as to present the appearance of the wall of a fortress.

At the point alluded to, a rude and grotesque-looking arch swept down from near the summit. It was apparently constructed of loose stones, resembling those which lay in huge irregular masses around the base of the tabular rock, and had no doubt been formed accidentally, in the fall of these fragments from the top, during some convulsion of nature. The arch was so narrow, and its surface so pointed and irregular, as to offer access to the rock only when climbed upon hands and knees; and when it is remembered that this precarious path, in some places nearly perpendicular, and on both sides presenting a frightful precipice, was at least six hundred feet long, it will readily be imagined that the idea either of ascending or descending, but particularly the latter, must have had something terrific even for the boldest imagination.

The feat had been performed on this and some former occasions by Julie and her lover, from simple daring, without any prospect of advantage; for here the curse of sterility was so complete, that even the eagles avoided the lonely rock. There was a dreary grandeur in the view from the summit which oppressed the heart. The region of cliff and precipice extended as far as the eye could reach. The only diversity in the scene was in the form of the craggy points which shot up their bald heads around; and in the angle of the abrupt and dizzy steeps, which hung threateningly over gulfs of darkness that were bottomless to the vision. A greyish brown colour, with no variety except of shade, overspread the picture. The silence, after the ear had become accustomed to the ceaseless sighing of the wind, seemed strange and mysterious; and it was observed that no one rested long upon that isolated rock without feeling a kind of horror creeping through his blood.

Julie and Antoine gazed around them for some time without speaking; but at last the latter, although with some apparent effort to subdue his feelings, started up. The western sky had long been covered with thick masses of clouds, which prevented him from ascertaining the position of the sun; and, now that he saw a dull round spot near the edge of the horizon, it was with

surprise and some alarm he discovered that the day was nearly at a close. The old man's prediction, however, respecting the weather, was evidently false; for, excepting in that particular point, the sky was as clear as it had been in the morning; and Antoine, aware of the exact distance they had to travel, and the time it would take, was certain of their being able to perform the journey long before nightfall.

Julie, before consenting to return, had lingered so long that a slight suspicion crossed Antoine's mind that, impressed by the strange feelings which weighed upon his own heart, she had some reluctance to descend the dangerous arch. But then, she walked so fearlessly along the edge of the precipice, and looked with so earnest an admiration upon the scene beyond, that the momentary idea fled. A sudden shadow, however, that at the moment fell upon the earth, as when a thick cloud crosses the mid-day sun, caused him to start and almost tremble. He remembered the old man's prediction; and he knew full well that a storm on these mountains was preceded by no greater warning than the flash which heralds the roar of the thunder.

"Come—come, Julie," he said quickly, "you are afraid of this tottering arch! Let us try who shall get first to the bottom." Julie turned round, and looked at him gravely.

"It is time," said she, "to return. The air is heavy and hot: there is a strange stillness among these cliffs, where the wind always sighs so loudly. If I was weather-wise, I would say, in spite of the blue sky above us, that a storm was about to burst." Antoine scarcely heard what she said, for he was gazing in her eyes; where he saw, or imagined he saw distinctly, the dark spot pointed out to him in the morning, in the midst of flashes of almost unnatural brightness. Impelled by a sudden feeling, which partook as much of pity as of devout admiration, he knelt before her, and seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips; and then, without another word, threw himself upon the arch, and gained the firm ground in safety.

On looking up, instead of following, she was standing upon the edge of the precipice, gazing upon the thick black clouds which,

As it appeared, had covered almost instantaneously the sky above. At length, however, she put forth her foot to commence the descent, but withdrew it with a shriek, as a flash of lightning threw its sudden glare upon the rocks. The thunder followed with scarcely the interval of a second ; and its hollow roar, repeated by the thousand echoes of the cliffs, shook the air. Flash followed flash, peal rolled upon peal ; the storm, as if awakened from its slumber swept down upon the world, like an armed man, to join the strife of nature ; the air grew thick, and dark, and heavy ; the fantastic ridges of the cliffs, now fading in the gloom, and now starting out in the red glare of the lightning, looked like the infernal genii of the place, called from their enchanted caves by some voice of power.

Antoine, as some mightier flash revealed the whole scene for a moment with the clearness of day, could still see his mistress standing upon the edge of the precipice. Her head was uncovered, and her arms extended towards heaven in an attitude of enthusiastic admiration ; and as she stood there, tall and motionless, with her long hair, which had escaped from its confinement, floating upon the storm, Antoine could scarcely repress the idea that he beheld a creature of another world. In another moment the arch was struck with lightning, and its gigantic ruins rolled around him.

He knew not by what miracle he escaped being crushed into dust ; for his thoughts, even at that terrible instant, were absorbed by the fate of Julie. Even before the commotion was over, which seemed to rock the earth, he flew to examine into the extent of the disaster ; and for a moment he had some hope, for the form at least, however broken and distorted, of the arch remained. Soon, however, he discovered how illusory was the idea that she could still descend alive ; for that form was now nothing more than a mockery. The gigantic wall, broken, shattered, and filled with gaping indentions, seemed to tremble as he leant upon it ; and when, in desperation, he attempted to ascend, the stones gave way beneath him, and he fell to the ground covered with bruises, which for a time deprived him of sensation. •

When he recovered, although the thunder was silent, the storm still raged with unabated fury, and heavy rain drifted along the earth. It was almost dark, but he could still have seen the white garments of Julie against the sky, if she yet stood upon the precipice. Julie had disappeared. It was possible—and his blood seemed to freeze as the idea struck him—that in madly attempting to descend, while he was insensible, she had fallen; and with trembling limbs he dragged himself to the base of the cliff, on either side of the arch, and searched for her body. He then repeatedly shouted out her name, but with as little effect; the sound, broken in the disturbed and watery atmosphere, was reverberated by echoes that seemed strange to his ear, and died sullenly away in the distance.

Julie, it was evident, was still on the rock, and had probably retired behind one of the loose stones with which the summit was covered to avoid the rain, and endeavour to preserve her life against the cold. Was it likely that this attempt would be successful? Antoine dared not say yes; but he would have died before saying no. Even *his* blood, owing to the time in which he had remained in inaction, although in so comparatively sheltered a situation, had begun to stagnate. What, then, must be the condition of Julie, exposed during the entire night on the loftiest cliff of the mountains, thinly clad, and with no other shelter from the piercing storm and the beating rain than a wet, cold stone?

Antoine, from his perfect remembrance of the localities, might still have reached the bottom of the mountain before midnight, although this indeed at a risk only preferable to passing the cold dark hours in the open air. The idea, however, never once occurred to him. As soon as he had fairly satisfied himself, as well as reasoning on probabilities and circumstances could do it, that Julie was still on the rock, he groped about for a fissure on the leeward side of a precipice, capable of admitting his body, and creeping in, coiled himself up in the manner which he thought best adapted to economize the natural warmth of his body, resolving to remain there till daybreak. The light of morning, he thought, would enable him to ascertain the fate of his mistress;

and whether he should find her alive or dead, he would attempt, by building up the arch cautiously at every step he proceeded, to scale the ridge.

During the dreary hours which he spent in this situation, the only sound that met his ear was the melancholy wail of the storm. He watched with involuntary interest the voice of desolation, as it swung among the rocks, modulated by the circumstances of its passage, and died moaningly away. Each new gust that followed, rising with a sudden swell, as the preceding one passed by, attracted the same attention in its turn. The bitterness of his feelings at length was worn away by the slumberous monotony of the sound; the pain of his cramped limbs was, at the same time, deadened by excess of cold; and soon his wearied senses found an involuntary refuge from the horrors that surrounded them in sleep.

His sleep, however, though deep, was not tranquil. His mind never wholly forgot the circumstances of his situation, although the senses that had taken cognisance of them were steeped in oblivion. The confused consciousness of his misery at length arranged itself into form, and the sleeper dreamed.

He imagined that the same old man who had warned him in the morning now stood by his side, and beckoned him to rise and follow. He obeyed the sign, and saw before him, with all the distinctness of reality, the broken and tottering arch. Julie stood upon it, unappalled by the danger; and her long hair, which hung like a mantle around her, unmoved by the storm. Her face was paler than the moon; her eyes glittered like stars; and her white raiment seemed as delicate and unsubstantial as the fleecy clouds of the sky. Antoine stretched out his arms to receive his mistress, who glided triumphantly down the arch. But suddenly a chilling sensation crept over his heart. His knees knocked against each other; his hair rose upon his head; his whole frame trembled; for he saw that the being before him was not a denizen of earth. He stepped backward in the agony of his fear; and the things and persons of his dream were shattered in pieces, as if by the movement. The arch crumbled into fragments; the spirit

melted from his sight; and amidst screams of terror, groans of anguish, and shouts of hellish laughter, he awoke.

He did not at once remember where he was, or what had befallen him. The profound stillness which reigned around was so singularly in contrast with the deafening tumult of his dream, that he imagined for a moment all things else that had been presented to his slumbering senses to be equally illusory. The storm had died away; there was not a breath or whisper on the desert mountain; and he could see the rocks before him bathed in moonlight.

He arose from his savage lair. The moon stood glorious and alone in the heavens; and the tall shadows of the mountain peaks lay along the earth as distinct, and apparently as substantial, as the cliffs themselves. The fortress-rock, whose uneven edges at the distant summit had all the appearance of ramparts painted on the bright sky, stood before him, vast and solemn in its desert grandeur, looking like some war-tower of the primeval world, which by its own strength and solidity had defied the revolutions of nature. The form of the mighty arch which swept down from its brow was still, as before, almost entire; but its ruin, rendered more visible by the moonlight, seemed so complete, that Antoine gave up the idea, as wild and impracticable, of reaching the top by its means, without the assistance of the whole village; and with bitterness of heart he determined to wait no longer, but to hasten homewards and give the alarm.

He had no sooner formed this resolution, than, on raising his eyes to bid a hasty adieu to the place where his unfortunate Julie lay—by this time, perhaps, insensible alike to heat and cold—he saw standing on the brink of the precipice, between him and the moon, the resemblance of her figure. His heart quaked at the sight. Her redundant hair hung motionless around her like a mantle of cloud, and her face shone with a pale and faded lustre, like that of the moon in the dawn.

She put her foot over the precipice, as if to step upon the arch; and a wild cry of warning and alarm burst from the lips of her lover. Heedless of the sound, she stepped upon the arch, and

walked calmly and majestically along its surface ; while the stones crumbled beneath her feet, and fragment after fragment rushed roaring into the abyss below. At length the whole of that part which remained between her and the rock gave way ; the sound of its fall was like the explosion of artillery, and the startled echoes of the mountain joined the thunderburst from their remotest caves.

The shape paused for a moment on the broken arch ; and Antoine saw that it was the same appearance which had startled him in his sleep—the dream-girl—that stood before him. She recommenced her descent, skimming so lightly over the tottering stones that their fall seemed the effect of some mysterious influence unconnected with the force of her foot. As she came nearer the amazed spectator, whose blood began to thicken in his veins, he saw that the journey, so fearful and so fatal to anything of mortal life, was undirected by her starry eyes, which were fixed as if upon some object in the distance.

She stepped upon the ground before him. His blood curdled ; his hair rose up ; a cold sweat broke over his forehead, and he staggered aside out of her path. The air felt chill, as she passed by—her face was as the face of a corpse, and her bare hands, long, stiff, and whiter than snow, looked as if they had been made of pure and polished marble. She did not move her eyes when he withdrew : they seemed to have looked *through* his figure at some object afar off. She passed on her way, and, turning round a cliff, disappeared.

Crushed and amazed, Antoine gazed after the phantom. When it had vanished, he started from his trance, and looked wildly above and around. The blessed moon shone serene and bright in the heavens ; the eternal rocks stood majestic and definite beside him. It was not a dream—he was awake ! Julie ! Julie ! *He had shrunk from the form of his beloved !*

He rushed after the shape. Its path was in the direct route homewards ;—his dead Julie, he thought, was going to visit the spirits of her family in the churchyard—their silent village of graves ! He turned the angle where she had vanished, and threaded with instinctive accuracy the mazes of the cliffs ; till at

length he saw suddenly the appearance before him. It was moving as before, gravely and glidingly along.

"Julie!" cried the lover, in a transport of passion and despair: the shape glided on. He rushed up to it—

"Julie! Julie!"—in vain! He ran before it—stood firm in the middle of the path, and opened his arms. It swerved not to the right nor to the left; its eyes were still fixed. Onward—onward it glided; nearer—nearer; and he clasped the frozen form to his bosom, and kissed its clay-cold lips.

The heart still beat! the breath of life was in the mouth! It was indeed Julie—she was alive!—*she was asleep!*

As soon as Antoine had convinced himself,—and it was not immediately he did so,—that the preservation of his mistress had been effected by one of those miracles sometimes performed by somnambulism, he led her carefully into a cleft in the rock, and stripping off his outer garments, covered her up as warmly as circumstances would permit. He then employed himself in, chafing her hands and feet, till the friction, together with the warmth from the clothing, had restored sensibility to her limbs, and Julie awoke. It was long before she comprehended what had happened. She imagined that she was still on the summit of the fortress-rock, and that the devoted Antoine, daring even the horrors and dangers of that terrific arch, had climbed to her assistance. The idea sent a glow of gratitude through her heart; but when she saw that he had almost stripped himself naked to shelter her from the cold with his garments, the sensation increased almost to suffocation, and was only relieved by a burst of tears.

When, cautiously and tenderly, he had described to her the miracle that had occurred, she insisted upon returning to the spot, see with her own eyes the proofs of what it exceeded her imagination to comprehend. When the ruins of the arch met her view, and she beheld its shattered segment hanging high over the abyss, and was told that on that fearful point she had stood, her blood seemed to freeze again within her veins, and she clasped her lover in a convulsive embrace, as if imploring him to save her from the horrors of her imagination. At the moment the work of

ruin was accomplished : the remains of the arch fell, with a roar like that of thunder, and Julie, for the first time in her life, fainted away.

When she recovered, and the image of death had, for the second time, awakened into life, it was the grey dawn of the morning. The effects of the moon were scarcely visible, and daylight was still so immature that it was dangerous to stir a single step in that region of cliff and precipice. Antoine was puzzled what to do, for Julie was still weak and unwell ; and he was about to strip off his outer garments again, and cover her up with them in the cleft of a rock. At this moment an unusual light appeared in the distance. Presently it separated into numerous sparks, moving in eccentric courses at the base of the mountain ; and soon after, some far and dim shouts were heard, which broke like the music of heaven upon his ear.

His suspense, however, was not speedily removed. The range of mountain was extensive, and no one knew the precise route which he and Julie had taken. Sometimes the lights vanished in the distance, and the shouts died away, notwithstanding his own efforts to make himself heard ; but presently the sounds and sights of hope would return, and he clasped his mistress closer to his breast, and whispered words of peace and comfort in her ear.

At length they were discovered by their friends ; and Julie, too unwell to walk, was placed in a litter formed of the outer garments of the men, and the procession set forth for the village. By the time they had gained the bottom of the mountain it was full morning. The sun shone in strength and beauty, and the song of innumerable birds welcomed back into the green and living world the wanderers of the desert. The strength of Julie, whose principal ailments were cold and fatigue, returned, and she begged to be set down, that she might join the march of the maidens. This, however, was opposed ; and she was carried in triumph into the village, the women singing and dancing before her, and the young men waving their green boughs, and keeping time with their feet as they marched.

The whole village, young and old, were assembled under the oak-tree, waiting in alarm the return of the hunters. Mothers ran to embrace their children, and sisters their brothers and sisters, and wives placed in the arms of their husbands the young infants who, they wept with joy to think, were not orphans. Antoine and Julie, however, were the hero and heroine of the hour. They were placed in the midst of the group while breakfast was preparing, and compelled to relate over and over again their wonderful tale.

It was observed that a singular change had taken place in the appearance of Julie. Her eyes were less dazzlingly bright, but still more lovely; and her voice less wild and high, but still more musical. The men looked upon her beauty with delight unrepessed by the fear of scorn, and the women circled round her in wonder and admiration.

"You are prettier than ever, Julie!" cried her companions. "What magical secret is this that you have learnt upon the midnight mountain? Tell us, we pray you!" Julie blushed, as she saw that Antoine was gazing in her face; but she cast down her eyes, and answered, softly, "That it is NOT GOOD FOR WOMAN TO BE ALONE!"





The Black Mask;
OR,
THE LOTTERY OF JEWELS.

CHAPTER I.

I have seen the day
When I could wear a mask, and tell a tale.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN the confusion which prevailed during the minority of Louis XIV. many families, as is customary in such cases, rose from obscurity to distinction, and a corresponding number sank from distinction to obscurity. Among the greatest sufferers from the capricious tyranny of Cardinal Mazarin was the Chevalier de

Belcour, a gentleman of great expectations and apparent influence. His patrimony was small, but his friends numerous. He had lately married for love, and was in the immediate prospect of a lucrative post about the court, and an heir to inherit his winnings.

At this interesting moment the ministerial thunder fell, scarcely preceded by a single flash to warn or terrify; and he lost the place, and was banished from the precincts of royalty. Madame de Belcour was more faithful to *her* promise; for in due time she brought forth the heir, after the inheritance had ceased to exist, even in the parents' dreams. Their court friends fled, according to the instincts of courtiers, from the falling house. The affairs of the chevalier, when obligingly examined by his creditors, were found to be in confusion. The family retired from Paris, growing poorer and poorer every day, till at length death put an end to the sorrows of the father and mother; and the boy who had been expected to make his appearance amidst the pomp of the court, and the welcoming of the gay and the fair, was only too happy to be afforded an asylum by an old dependent of his family, who was a small farmer, with a stock consisting chiefly of a few goats.

By the time Frederic de Belcour had reached the age of fifteen, his mind had so far accommodated itself to the circumstances in which he was placed, that a casual observer would scarcely have discovered, even in his air and manner, any superiority to his situation. The remembrance of his parents was gradually lost in the monotonous hardships by which he was beset; and the life of a goatherd seeming to be his fate, would gradually have become so, but for one of those circumstances which, although insignificant in themselves, when exaggerated by the magical imagination of youth, become not only the omens but the agents of destiny.

At a little distance from his abode there lived an elderly lady, a Madame de Neuillant, who held a farm of some magnitude, and was generally supposed to be in easy circumstances. There was a good deal of eccentricity in this lady's manner, who, with all the desire in the world to appear amiable, was yet withheld by pride, avarice, and a naturally bad temper, from acting in the only

way calculated to secure the reputation she coveted. She had no children, and few visitors ; and, notwithstanding its flourishing condition, there were few establishments in the country-side of less living interest than Madame de Neuillant's farm.

Frederic had sometimes occasion to pass near the boundary of the farm, at which there was a line of fields extending to the house ; and one morning very early he saw a peasant girl, or woman, within the enclosure, sitting under a tree, watching poultry. Her dress was exceedingly coarse, and by no means new ; and a basket was beside her, which appeared to contain her breakfast. There was nothing very interesting in this discovery ; and, after a listless look, Frederic passed on.

The next morning, however, he saw her again. On the one after, she was still at her post ; and by degrees, Frederic, as he passed, began to think of her as a part of the landscape. He had not yet seen her face, for she always sat with her back towards the hedge, and without moving her position. But, young or old, handsome or ugly, after some time had elapsed, he could not look without a feeling of interest upon one whose lonely and desolate condition appeared to resemble his own. One morning, therefore, arming himself with a little basket of wild fruit, which grew in plenty on the goat-farm, he leaped the hedge, and went forward to pay his respects to his companion.

The poultry-watcher did not turn her head at the noise he made, nor even when his morning salutation had been pronounced ; and Frederic, half ashamed of the adventure, as the idea struck him that the incognito was no other than Veronica, an old deaf servant of Madame de Neuillant, whom he knew very well, went round to address her in front. The youth's surprise was prodigious to see, instead of the withered features of Veronica, nothing more than a pair of eyes—white, black, or grey, brilliant or opaque, he knew not which—staring at him through a black mask. The hands of the figure were as closely veiled from observation by a pair of thick, coarse gloves ; and even the feet were sunk in enormous hob-nailed shoes, although the delicacy of the ankle, which peeped like a piece of exquisite sculpture from

beneath her petticoat, seemed to indicate a conformation very dissimilar in size and shape.

Frederic could have spoken to Veronica, or anybody else whose face was uncovered; but in the present emergency he was quite at a loss. He stood staring for some time at the black mask, without opening his lips; but at length, feeling his situation to be somewhat awkward, more especially as he could see the eyes of the figure still glistening at him through the holes, he summoned a sudden resolution, and, with rustic politeness, presented the basket of wild fruit. A slight hissing sound came from the lips of the poultry-watcher, which he felt himself to be at liberty to interpret into, "Je vous remercie;" and with no little eagerness she immediately raised the mask far enough to enable her to put some of the fruit into her mouth.

The chin, which this action discovered, was such a chin as Frederic had never seen before in his life; it was small, and round, and so dazzlingly white!—but this might have been partly owing to the blackness of the mask. The mouth he only saw for an instant; but he had time enough to perceive that the lips were the most delicious in the world; and when these heaven-gates closed upon his fruit, he saw it disappear with a sigh of envy. Having presented his offering, however, and made his bow, he could devise no pretence for staying to see the goddess eat; and as she herself took no further notice of him, after lingering for a moment, he made another bow, and took his leave.

This adventure, it will be conceived, formed abundant food for the imagination of a boy who had nothing to do all day long but to feed goats and dream. For the first time for a considerable period the thoughts revived within him of what he might have been; and while the tears started involuntarily into his eyes at the idea of his present degradation, they were turned into a consoling sweetness by the reflection that he was perhaps in the precise situation of the beautiful incognita. That she was no peasant was evident, for peasants did not watch poultry in masks. Who could she be? Assuredly, not the relation of Madame de Neuillant, or she never *could be consigned to so degrading a drudgery. At all events,*

she was fond of fruit, and this at least he had in his power to bestow; and he determined to take advantage of the pretext to see her as long as her appetite remained.

The next morning Frederic was there by daylight. He laid himself down under the tree, in the precise spot where she had lain, and waited in great anxiety for her coming. At last she came—he saw her afar off, and starting up pulled off his hat. Her walk was like some graceful dance; never was a woman so playful, nor a girl so dignified. She accepted the fruit as before; but continued still to eat with her mask on. There was nothing, however, of constraint or mystery in her manner of wearing it, and Frederic was half tempted to ask her to remove it altogether. For several mornings this singular interview took place in the same manner; but at length, from monosyllables, careless bends of the head, and other gestures, the incognita suddenly arrived at the familiarity of asking a question.

“Why were you not here yesterday?” she asked one morning, in surprise. Frederic was overwhelmed with delight, he knew not why; a warm glow broke over his face, and he stammered forth some excuse for an accident which he mentally vowed should never happen again. From this time he took courage, and before a week had elapsed, he and the masked girl were on speaking terms. The first use he made of his privilege was to satisfy his curiosity.

“Why, Mademoiselle,” he asked, “do you always wear that black mask?”

“Because it is my aunt’s desire.”

• “Your aunt! then you are the niece of Madame de Neuillant?”

“I have the misfortune to be so.”

“And why does she wish you to wear a mask?”

“Because she is unwilling to spoil my beauty by the occupation to which her avarice and bad temper condemn me.”

“Your beauty!” said Frederic, hesitating—“are you so *very* beautiful?”

“That depends upon taste,” replied the damsel, “but you shall see;” and taking off her mask, and throwing back the hood of her

cloak, she shook her long curls over her neck, and turned up her face to the critic.

The rustic chevalier was ready to die, without any metaphor, upon the spot; and if the description of a contemporary be faithful, he would have had some excuse for the weakness.

"She was tall and well-shaped," says Mademoiselle Scuderi, describing our heroine, under the name of Lyriane; "her size was not unbecoming, but rather conduced to set off her fine form; her complexion was delicately striking, her rich auburn locks flowed in natural ringlets; her nose was finely turned, and her mouth beautifully formed; her deportment was mild, noble, and yet lively; and, to render her beauty more perfect and more enchanting, her eyes were incomparable. These were black, sparkling, tender, passionate, and full of fire; their expression had something indescribably attractive; the soft melancholy which they at times evinced, charmed and interested all beholders; while at others, the mixture of gaiety and pleasantry which they expressed, inspired all with joy and delight."

"What do you think of it?" asked the damsel.

"Your aunt was right," said Frederic, recovering with difficulty from the shock which such an apparition produced unavoidably in the nerves of a goatherd—"she was perfectly right to prevent as much damage as she could, both to yourself and others. But it nevertheless appears strange to me that Madame de Neuillant should be so anxious to preserve a beauty, the possessor of which she sends to watch her poultry."

"It must appear odd, indeed," said the poultry-girl; "but the truth is, there is a prestige in our family on the subject of my beauty, which even avarice and meanness cannot get over. When my mother was once telling me of the fortunes of my ancestors, I interrupted her by asking, 'And what shall I be?' 'What you will,' said my mother. 'Then I will be a queen!' was my reply; and from that moment, in the midst of all our misfortunes and degradations, my beauty—the only thing I possessed which could by possibility elevate me to a throne—was held religiously sacred." Frederic smiled gravely.

"And you too," said he musing—"had you ancestors, and misfortunes, and degradations?"

"Plenty! plenty!" replied she, with a sigh; "and as it gives one relief to speak, and as speaking to *you* can be of no more consequence than if my audience was confined to the trees and stones among which you are born to live and die, to-morrow I will tell you my story."

Frederic was not greatly pleased with the mode in which this promise was made; however, he consoled himself with the idea that he too had a story to tell.

"Let us hear," said he, "in the first place, this wonderful narration of the niece of the crusty old farmeress, Madame de Neuillant, and then she shall listen too, in her turn, to the fortunes of the family of the Chevalier de Belcour." Frederic had passed a sleepless night; and he was pacing backwards and forwards under the tree, and wondering at the unaccustomed laziness of the sun, long before either that luminary or the fair poultry-girl appeared. At last daylight and the black mask arrived, and the story was begun.

"My family," said the mask, "is one of the most ancient in the kingdom; but as I presume that you know little, and care less, about the antiquities of nobility, I shall merely mention that my grandfather was Theodore Agrippe d'Aubigné, gentleman of the bedchamber to Henri IV."

"Was that all?" asked Frederic, with a sigh of relief.

"All!" exclaimed the damsel, tossing her head disdainfully; "this it is to relate history to goatherds! My father, Constant d'Aubigné, having ruined his fortune by the extravagances which gentlemen of high birth are so liable to run into, formed the design of retrieving it by one of the projects to which men of genius resort, when meaner spirits take to the highway. He determined to proceed to Carolina, in the New World, on a colonizing adventure; and, his merits being looked on with a jaundiced eye by his own court, he applied for assistance to the government of England. This being discovered he was thrown into the prison of Trompette."

"What!" cried Frederic, "for applying abroad for the friendship which he sought in vain for at home!"

"True, shepherd," said the damsel; "but you know nothing of state polity. I do. In the prison of Trompette, my father, having nothing else to amuse himself with, fell in love with the daughter of the governor."

"Ah! that is something like a story! And she returned his passion?"

"Of course. Her family name was De Cardillac, and her father, the governor, was a gentleman of rank in the Bourdelois. By her assistance the prisoner escaped——"

"Right! right! that is just the way!"

"Hush! He married her in the year 1627, and they at length fairly set out for Carolina. Things did not answer there so well as was expected; for men of noble families do not at once succeed in business; and in a few years they had the boldness to return to France, and were thrown into the prison of Niort, in Poitou. In that dungeon was I born, in 1635."

"You! in a prison! Oh, Jupiter! Were they not afraid when they saw you?"

"Afraid? Why?"

"You must have looked so like a spirit in the darkness of the dungeon!"

"I was a prisoner for almost the four first years of my life; for although my mother might have enjoyed liberty had she chosen it, she yet preferred captivity with her husband. She nursed me herself—an act of attention in a woman of quality of which I am highly sensible. We at length obtained our enlargement, and set out for the island of Martinique. On the way we were chased by an English frigate, and afterwards by a storm; but as I was destined to eat wild berries in a mask in the farm of Neuillant, and relate my history to a goat-boy, we arrived in safety at our destination. There, being left on the shore by the negligence of a servant, I was nearly devoured by a serpent; but if I tell everything I shall never have done.

"My father succeeded this time in his projects, for some men

of noble families learn business in time. Everything prospered, our overseers were vigilant, and as my father was vigilant too, they were honest, our negroes worked hard, and, by the blessing of Heaven, their families increased so fast, that we had as many slaves as there was work for them to do. My mother now had time to educate her children, and tell them stories—a great happiness for me, for I learned that my grandfather, Theodore Agrippe d'Aubigné, had been a friend of Queen Jane d'Albret and the King of Navarre, and afterwards gentleman of the bedchamber to the latter when he became Henri Quatre. It was at this time I told my mother that I should like to be a queen. The expression was repeated to our neighbours when they came to eat capons and drink wine and zangaree, and everybody thought it very extraordinary, and extraordinarily ominous.

“At last my father died, and as his expenses had been somewhat more liberal than his income, we found ourselves in great embarrassment. The affair was not now how to send me to Paris to be educated, and to see if there were not any kings in the market. My mother was obliged to go there herself to look after some old debts, leaving in the meantime one of her children behind as a pledge that she would return; and as boys are usually preferred to girls on a journey, even when the former have no idea of marrying queens, my brother went with her to France, and I remained in Martinique.

“I was placed under the charge of strangers; and these persons, unfortunately, had been accustomed to take charge of slaves. You would hardly suppose it, but the eyes that habitually rest on working negroes, become at last incapable of discovering the difference of colour between those and white people, unless reminded perpetually by the circumstances of wealth, rank, and consequence. I, therefore, having none of these things to act as remembrances, sunk very soon into the condition of a slave. The ladies of the family more especially treated me with great harshness; but this is natural. The imaginations and habits of women are not only more easily but more deeply impressible than those of men; and hence, in the colonies, where slaveholders are only

tyrants, the fair sex is composed of incarnate fiends. I used to pity them, when I saw the looks of hate, mingled with grotesque horror, with which my mistresses were regarded; but for all my pity I was obliged, one way or other, to get through my task. It would have been useless to complain, and folly to repine: remonstrances in such a case are answered with stripes or laughter, and sulkiness spoils the complexion.

"My mother, in the meantime, did not return, nor even write; and business becoming slack with my worthy hosts, they instituted a comparison between the profits accruing from my labour and the loss sustained by my consumption. The balance proved to be against me, and they led me therefore before the magistrate to make their complaint. It was clear that my mother had given them the slip; and the case, they thought, was exceedingly hard, that the colony should be burthened with the maintenance of an individual who, from her complexion, could not legally be sold as a slave. It was determined, therefore, that I should be returned in the manner of unsaleable goods; and a Madame de Montalembert, who was suspected to be some relation of my mother's, and whose address they fortunately knew, was fixed upon as the consignee.

"When I arrived at Paris I was then just ten years of age. Madame de Montalembert was greatly surprised at receiving such a present. My dress and manners were so extraordinary, that I was shown to everybody who visited the house as a young savage just imported from the wilds of Martinique; and if I had not speedily found my mother, I should certainly have run away and taken my chance in the world. My mother was busy laying claim to the barony of Durmeau, and prosecuting the Government for money lent by my grandfather, Theodore Agrippe d'Aubigné (gentleman of the bedchamber), to his master when king of Navarre. This was the reason why she had not time to write so far as Martinique. Unhappily, she did not succeed in either of these enterprises, but was obliged to retire from the contest with an annual allowance from the Baron of Durmeau of two hundred francs a-year.*

* About eight pounds sterling, at the present rate of exchange.

"You may imagine that we both required to work very hard to obtain bread to our salt; and, indeed, I believe my poor mother would have sunk under our afflictions, had it not been for the hopes she entertained from my growing beauty. While she was litigating for the barony, we were assured by all our visitors, that they could not look upon me without admiration and delight; that the loveliness of my person could only be excelled by the elegance of my manners; and that my extraordinary talents did ample justice to the pains which no doubt had been taken to bring them to perfection. Among the rest, Madame de Neuillant was by no means blind to my merits; and at last she even begged my mother to allow her the honour of giving the last finish to my education under her own roof.

"My mother complied. She lost her causes—and here I am!"

The goatherd-chevalier continued gazing in her face for a long time after Françoise d'Aubigné had concluded her story. He was confounded by the variety and novelty of her adventures, and astonished beyond measure at the equanimity of mind she at present displayed in a situation which must have been still more irksome than Martinique slavery. Her birth, it is true, was not so overwhelmingly lofty as he had begun to fear. Her grandfather had been a gentleman of the bed-chamber to Henri IV.—but when then? his father had been very near becoming one to Louis XIV. while hers was nothing more than a wandering speculator. His story, however? What could he have to tell worth listening to, after such a romance as he had just heard? "Mademoiselle," he would say, "I am no more a goatherd than you are a poultry-herd, by birth. My father was chased from the court by Cardinal Mazarin; he fell into poverty, died;—and here I am." This would never do. He cursed his stars for their malicious leniency, and wished heartily that something would occur even now to bring him under the lash of misfortune.

Françoise, after concluding her tale, had moved away, without so much as turning a glance of adieu upon her auditor. She seemed to have spoken as if in soliloquy, wholly indifferent to the applause or disapprobation of the listener. But, after all, Frederic

was better than a tree to talk to; she seemed happy to see him when he made his appearance, and out of humour when he stayed away; he, in short, was her only consolation, small as that might be. Fain would he to have talked in his turn; but this was out of the question. The lady's tongue had been fairly set a going, and on it went like a bell-clapper. Once, indeed, he was determined to be heard, and had even mustered magnanimity enough to begin his story; but whether it was owing to the key of dignity in which he set out, or to the innate absurdity of a goatherd supposing his story to be worth the hearing, Françoise burst into a fit of laughter, which dispersed the poultry screaming, cackling, and gobbling over the field.

Thus did these strangely-met companions amuse themselves for nearly two months. The goatherd at last became absolutely necessary to Françoise, and she looked upon the attentions he was perpetually showing her with a kind of habitual gratitude. One morning he would bring her flowers, another fruit, and another he would enrich her repast with a bowl of cream, no inconsiderable addition to a meal which consisted in general of nothing more than brown bread and water. Her manner softened towards him, she spoke kindly and warmly; the boy felt as if he was in Heaven.

At this time the strangest notion entered his head that ever afflicted goatherd.

"I love Mademoiselle d'Aubigné," said he, "and she shall know it before she is aware of my hereditary rank. What triumph it will be to find that she returns the passion of a goatherd, and what joy to tell her that love has metamorphosed him into a chevalier!" The hopes, fears, tremblings, flushes, and cold sweats which preluded this declaration, may be imagined; but at last it came. He had put off the awful moment, on the morning destined for the disclosure, till they were just about to part.

"Mademoiselle," said he, turning pale all on a sudden, and gasping as if in the last agony, "do not go yet—I have something to say to you."

"Say it quickly, then, for the bell rings."

"I—I—I ——"

"What is the matter?"

"I love you!"

"You! You love me! Have you lost your senses, Frederic?"

"Not quite, Mademoiselle; but if I have not the happiness to hear from you that I may at least hope ——"

"Good heavens!" cried Françoise, with vexation, "this it is to tell one's history to a goat-boy!"

"Divine Françoise!" exclaimed Frederic, seizing her hand, and kneeling at her feet. "If a poultry-girl can be the grand-daughter of a lord of the bedchamber, is it not equally possible that a goatherd may be the son of a chevalier?" Françoise snatched away her hand, and looked for a moment as if she meant to give him a sound cuff with it. At last, smothering by a strong effort her desire of vengeance, and perhaps inwardly balancing the account with his fruit, flowers, and cream, she turned silently round, and walked with indignant majesty towards the house. Frederic remained on his knees, gazing after her retreating figure till his eyes were blinded with tears; and he threw himself down on his face, in an agony of grief, indignation, and despair.

It was three days before the discomfited goatherd repaired again to the trysting-tree.

"It is evident," said he, having at last persuaded himself to condescend, "that she does not love strongly enough to marry a goatherd. But what then? if she only loves enough even to think of a chevalier, would not this be sufficient honour for any nobleman in France? Her agitation is now over; she repents, no doubt, her vivacity, and will listen calmly to what, in her anger, she must have looked upon as a new insult. Courage! let us try once more." The poultry-watcher was sitting as usual under her favourite tree. The attitude was decidedly pensive; and Frederic's heart, as he stole behind her, seemed to dissolve with grief and tenderness. He hemmed slightly, and as musically as possible, to give indication of his approach; then louder, then louder still. She did not move.

"She must have heard my footsteps," thought he, "and is

prepared. I will walk past her, as if on my way to the house; if her silence proceeds from emotion, or even a slight pique, she will call me back; but if from pride, she will allow me to go on, and on I will go, without turning my head, if I should fall down dead the moment I get out of her sight." The latter conjecture seemed to be the true one, for the unhappy lover had walked ten or twelve paces without hearing even a sigh. By the sixth step, hope had sunk into despair; but before the twelfth, despair had risen into indignation. Forgetting his resolution, he turned round in a fury, and beheld not the black mask, but the dull eyes and shrivelled cheeks of old Veronica.

"Heavens and earth!" cried he, "where is Françoise?"

"Eh?" said Veronica—"whom?"

"Françoise!"

"Eh? François? he has gone to Paris with a cart-full of onions and garlic."

"Horrible! I mean Mademoiselle d'Aubigné!" bawling to the extent of his voice.

"Eh? There is no need for so much noise, though one may be a little deaf with the cold. Madame d'Aubigné is in Paris, too."

"Oh! her daughter!"

"Eh? my daughter? Thank you, Monsieur," said Veronica, getting up and curtsying, "both she and the baby are as well as can be expected."

"Wretched woman!" exclaimed the lover, laying a hand upon each of her shoulders. Veronica held up her cheek.

"It is Mademoiselle d'Aubigné I inquired for!" shouted Frederic in her ear, insensible to gallantry and politeness.

"Could not you have said so at first?" asked the old woman, tossing her head. "Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, I hear, has been attempting to seduce into marriage a young chevalier who used to help her to watch the poultry; and, on the complaint of her friends, she was yesterday sent to Niort, to be shut up in the Ursuline convent there." Veronica continued to talk, but her lover heard no more. This was a pretty sequel to his passion! Françoise had no doubt

told her aunt of his proposals ; and the infamous woman, under pretence of securing her family from contamination, had imprisoned his mistress in a convent ! Could it be possible that they meant to make her a nun ? Dreadful idea ! But even in this there was consolation ; for, before the period of her noviciate expired, fortune might put it into his power to deliver her. How ? He was only a goatherd ; he had not a friend in the world beyond the precincts of the goat farm ; he had not a livre in his pocket.

Tormenting himself with such reflections, he went home, and was received by his patron at the door.

"So, young man," said the latter, "I find now what has been the matter with my goats for some time past. You have been making love, with a murrain on you ! A daughter of mine, it seems, would not serve your turn ; but you must be making proposals of marriage to a lady of quality ! It is a pretty return, indeed, for the hospitality I have shown you, to bring upon my head the enmity of such a neighbour as Madame de Neuillant ; but, go—I have done with you : carry your ambition and your ingratitude to any market you choose, and all the harm I wish you in your new career is that, for the future, you may know when you are well off !"

"I knew it," cried Frederic with a bound—"it is my fate !—it is my fate ! Adieu, my old friend—may Heaven prosper you ! Adieu, the peasant's slothful life ! Adieu, ye goats !" And turning his back upon the asylum of his youth, he walked away with rapid steps, and was soon lost in the distance.

CHAPTER II.

I reckon this always—that a man is never undone till he be hanged.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was somewhat less than twelve months after the conclusion of the last chapter, that a stripling cavalier, well dressed and well mounted, but without attendants, rode hastily up to the gate of the Ursuline convent at Niort.

"The year has not expired," said he, talking aloud in the forgetfulness of his hurry—"she cannot yet be a nun! Let us see whether this proud poultry-girl will treat with equal disdain the Chevalier de Belcour and the goatherd of Neuillant." On arriving at the convent, he was introduced into the presence of the superior.

"Madame," said he, "I request permission to speak with Mademoiselle d'Aubigné."

"With Mademoiselle d'Aubigné! With our poor sister Françoise? Alas! she is gone!" The young man turned pale, and staggered back against the wall.

"Dead!" he said, in a voice almost inaudible with emotion.

"You are unwell, my son," said the superior calmly; "if we were richer, I would offer you some refreshment. Our poor sister is indeed in a manner dead; for she has gone back into the world, which is the grave of righteousness."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Frederic, returning to life.—"Where has she gone? How long is it ago? What was the cause of her leaving you?"

"As to where she is gone," said the old nun methodically, "that I do not know. We never inquire into these things, lest perchance our virgin ears should be shocked by hearing that the betrothed of divine love had gone into the adulterous arms of an earthly husband. The time, however, of her renunciation of the advantages of our society was eight months ago, falling on the twenty-fourth day of December, in the year of salvation, one thousand——" but the visitor was already at the door.

"The cause of her leaving," continued the superior, following him, and raising her voice, "was her inability to pay for her board, small as the sum was. We kept her as long as we could, for the love of God,—but we are so poor!—indeed, we are very poor!" The cavalier drew his purse, with an expression of countenance rather sour than charitable, and put some money into her hand.

"devil take St. Ursula!" he exclaimed, leaping upon his horse—for Frederic was a Calvinist, and could therefore swear at the saints without violence to his conscience—"It is almost the

last! But that signifies little: after losing Françoise, what is worth preserving?"

On arriving at Madame de Neuillant's farm, which was his next place of destination, he made a circuit round the enclosures so as to reach the accustomed tree; thinking it just possible that the miserly aunt, on learning that he had left the country, had taken back Mademoiselle to watch poultry again. His heart beat wildly when he saw the eternal cloaked figure at its usual post; but on leaping the hedge, he discovered, as before, only the stolid features of old Veronica under the hood.

"In Heaven's name," cried he, "where is Françoise?"

"Eh? François? He is gone to Paris with the cart."

"Mademoiselle d'Aubigné!"

"Eh? Madame d'Aubigné? She is in Paris, too—in a grave in the churchyard of Saint Antoine."

"Good Heavens! and Mademoiselle?"

"Eh! Mademoiselle? She is in Paris, too—but having a little cold at present, I did not hear very well whether François said she was with her mother or not." He rode up to the house, as if he meant to carry it by assault.

"Where is Mademoiselle d'Aubigné?" said he to the servants.

"We do not know," answered they—"and our mistress is in Paris."

"Where is Madame de Neuillant to be found in Paris?"

"We cannot tell; but she will return in a few days, and then you may call again, for she is always glad to see visitors who come on horseback, or in a carriage." Grieved and confounded, the young chevalier rode into Paris, and proceeded to a hotel, which had been appointed as the place of rendezvous by him and a Dutch gentleman who was his travelling associate.

The father of Ernest Waldenstein had been the wandering goatherd's first patron. Chance, or what passes for such in the affairs of men, had thrown Frederic in his way very shortly after he had left the farm; and, struck by the intelligence and spirit of the boy, as well as touched by the desolateness of his situation, Waldenstein, who was a rich merchant retired from business,

carried him home with him to his villa at Bodegrave, a small town in Holland between Utrecht and the Hague. Here the story of his noble birth, which had failed of effect with the republican merchant, was listened to with avidity by the females of the family; he became in process of time almost like a child of the house; and it was at last determined that he should accompany his patron's son on a tour to Paris. They had separated at the town of Niort; Frederic being desirous of meeting his mistress undisturbed by the presence of a third party, while Ernest was too anxious to reach the capital to complain of the exclusion.

On entering the hotel, the chevalier found his friend striding up and down the room with an appearance of feverish animation, which surprised him into a momentary forgetfulness of his own calamities.

"What is the matter, Waldenstein?" were his first words.

"Oh, such an adventure!" cried the young Dutchman. "Delightful Paris, no wonder that you are the admiration of the world, since you are peopled by angels!"

"What, in love already? Why, you are only just arrived. Sit down—you make me giddy. What is for dinner?—No—I am sick; I will go to bed."

"How! let me feel your pulse; put out your tongue: your mistress is married."

"Dead, perhaps! My dear Waldenstein, I fear I shall take to my bed in good earnest for at least three days; for, till the end of that time, I have no chance of discovering whether my beautiful Françoise still illumines this otherwise dark sphere with her earthly presence."

"Speak prose, for Heaven's sake!" said Ernest. "If the dream of your boyhood is past, so much the better for you—and for another too, who shall be nameless. Why, what a thing is this calf-love! Do you forget that, a year ago, you were not much higher than your sword? and that still you are very little of a man indeed in the flesh, whatever you may be in the spirit? For shame!—get you a beard, grow broad shouldered, and then go back to Bodegrave, and ask my little sister Agnes whether she knows you again." Waldenstein was not so much the senior of his friend

as to make the raillery very bitter ; and Frederic slightly blushing at the name of Agnes, suffered his thoughts to waft him into the midst of the dykes and dams of Holland. The next moment, however, recollecting the disappearance of his first love, whom he was not only impelled by passion, but piqued in vanity, to inspire with kindred sentiments, he resumed the befitting pathos of expression.

"But you do not inquire into *my* adventure?" continued Ernest. "Oh most eloquent Apollo!—if I had but words! words! words! Only fancy, Belcour—fancy the youngest of the Graces."

"Ha! youngest!"

"Charming sixteen, upon my honour! The youngest of the Graces, I say; but refined and spiritualized by a tender melancholy—a meek humility ——"

"You relieve me!"

"Tall, and elegantly formed; with hair of the sunniest auburn, showering in natural ringlets over her neck."

"Oh!"

"And then her eyes—blackier than night, and yet brighter than day!"

"It is Françoise! Wandenstein, I charge you, do not love her!"

"You are too late: if the furies and the destinies were to cry 'Waldenstein, do not love her!' I would love her still. But she cannot, must not, shall not be Françoise! Take notice, that whatever comes of it, the affair was not of my seeking, but the exclusive contrivance and workmanship of Fate itself. I was in search of an old servant of our family, who has fallen into poverty; and being directed to a mean and ruinous, but lofty building, wandered from stage to stage, through every gradation of misery, till I reached the top. Here, as if by some mysterious instinct, I opened a door without knocking, and went in. The room was small, and miserably furnished, but my attention was soon absorbed by the inhabitant. It was the same young girl whom I would have described just now had I been able. She gazed at me with surprise and curiosity, but without fear; and I at her, with amazement and admiration. Neither of us spoke. I do not know how it was, but I could not find a word, if I had given my life for it: I

must have looked enormously foolish ; for, after gaping at her in this manner for I do not know how long, I made her a profound bow, and retired."

"How insufferably tedious you are !" exclaimed Frederic, with vexation. "Cannot you tell me at once who she is?"

"Patience, patience !" said his friend ; "I found the object of my search next door ; and the account he gave me of his beautiful neighbour was so affecting, and yet so encouraging, that I almost wept with pity, and then almost laughed with joy. She and her mother, it seems, had taken up their abode in that small chamber some months before. They were miserably poor ; they had no friends—no acquaintances ; they worked from morning till night, in solitude, and almost in darkness ; and they never were known to leave their dismal abode, except sometimes at nightfall, when the daughter, concealing her angel form in an old mantle, and her beautiful face in a black mask——" Frederic sank, pale and trembling, into a chair.

"I knew," continued his friend, "that I should affect you.——When the daughter, I say, went out to sell the little articles of fancy work they had manufactured, and bring home the price in the form of their scanty supply of daily bread. Well, the mother sank at last. She became unwell, and then worse and worse ; and then she died. The daughter followed her remains to the grave, and then went back to her now more dreary solitude. The only indication that a change had taken place, was visible to my informer in her paler face, the few times he had an opportunity of seeing it, and audible in the half-suppressed sobs he sometimes heard when passing her door."

"It is Françoise," cried Frederic—"tamed at last by care, softened and chastened by affliction !" and the young chevalier, forgetting his pretensions to manhood, such as they were, burst into tears.

Soon after mid-day, the two friends having dined,* went to visit

* Louis XIV. dined at twelve, and his courtiers in consequence were obliged to wait till the unreasonable hour of one. Madame de Sevigné, in the year

the Chevalier de Meré, a gentleman to whose attentions they were recommended by letter, by the elder Waldenstein. The chevalier was a reformed rake, well enough acquainted with the world to be able to laugh at it in the right place, and withal a man of some pretensions to a knowledge of literature. Like most men who have been devotees of pleasure in their youth, and lived long enough to see the paint fall off from the paltry idols of their worship, he was a railer and a satirist; and the manner of his reception, therefore, in society, was regulated less by the love than dread of the company.

"So, young Sirs," said this personage, after glancing at the letter, "mine ancient friend is desirous that in this your first visit to Paris you should be introduced to good society. This wish is natural; but I would he had been less general in his terms. Good society, according to the meaning of a wealthy Dutch merchant, is probably composed of traders and tradesmen, whose fortunes are either making or made. His wife, on the other hand, would designate by the same expressions such persons as are in the habit of wearing blue coats somewhat shorter than those of their neighbours.* For my part, I look upon the former as nothing more than the menials of society—the hewers of wood and drawers of water for their fellow-men—whose triumph consists either in the patient industry of their labour, or in the finesse by

1671, was exposed, as she tells us, to this dire necessity. "*Je vis un homme,*" says she, "*au bout de la chambre, qui je crus être le maître d'hôtel. J'allai à lui, et lui dis : Mon pauvre Monsieur, faites-nous dîner ; il est une heure, je meurs de faim.*" Four years later, she says of Madame de Coligni, "*Elle aimoit bien à vivre règlement, et à dîner à midi comme les autres.*"

* In order to distinguish his principal courtiers, Louis XIV. invented blue short coats, embroidered with gold and silver. The permission to wear these was a great favour to such as were guided by vanity. They were solicited almost like the collar of an order. These coats were worn over a doublet adorned with ribbons, and over the coat passed a belt, to which hung the sword. There was also a sort of laced cravat, and a hat adorned with a double row of feathers. This mode, which lasted till 1684, became that of all Europe, except Spain and Poland; for people almost everywhere already piqued themselves on imitating the court of Louis XIV.

which they obtain for a common service, a more than common remuneration. As for the courtiers, they are creatures of a higher grade in the scale of being, trafficking as they do, not in the humble necessities and luxuries of animal life, but in the greatnesses and littlenesses, the virtues, vices, foibles, and follies—in short, in the component parts of the intellectual character of men.

"The mercantile class I do not know—they are out of my way : it is sufficient for me to have the luxuries of the East and West at my table and upon my back, without encouraging with anything more than coin the individuals who have imported them, in expectation of my custom.—The courtiers, again, although acknowledging them, as I do, by virtue of their calling, to be worthy of my patronage, are as yet too imperfect in their parts. We have, in fact, no court—we are only in the rehearsal."—The young Hollander looked blank at this discourse, and seemed to be considering within himself whether it would not be reasonable to feel offended ; but Frederic, who entered readily into the humour of his countryman, listened with much appearance of deference.

"The very circumstance," said he, when M. de Meré paused, as if in great perplexity with regard to what he should do with the applicants—"the very circumstance of your friend omitting to specify the nature of the society, proves his unmeasured confidence in the judgment of him to whom he addressed his request ; and if you are inclined to comply with his wishes, I would beg of you to lead us, without more ceremony, into what you yourself would reckon good company."

"Good company," said M. de Meré, "is not readily to be fallen in with. If you go to the Court, it is not there ; if you go to the Church, it is not there ; if you go to the camp, it is not there ; if you go to the counting-house, it is not there. Where do you think it is?"

"I am sure I can form no idea."

"Have you ever read a book called 'The Comic Romance'?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"It is gross almost to filthiness ; and, although relieved

occasionally by some touches of nature and some flashes of humour, is yet, upon the whole, about as stupid a piece of inert literature as I ever stumbled upon."

"Right, very right; and do you admire in the same ratio the author's poems?"

"Precisely."

"Do you happen to know anything of this fortunate littérateur?"

"Only that his name is Paul Scarron."

"He is deformed, paralytic, gouty, dissipated, and poor. Come with me to his house this evening, and you will meet with the best company in Paris." The two friends being just at the period of life when the absurd and fantastic have their greatest charm, acceded cheerfully to a proposal which promised them abundance of laughter, if no solid amusement. Ernest, however, could not sufficiently wonder at the choice made by his grave father of a chaperon for his son in Paris.

• The house of Paul Scarron was in the Rue d'Enfer (Hell Street), and in external appearance seemed by no means an unfit rendezvous for the originals whom the strangers expected to meet. After stumbling through a dark court, they ascended a stair neither old nor particularly clean, and were ushered into a room already crowded with company.

The poet was easily recognised. He was a little, ugly, deformed, old-looking man, although in reality under fifty years of age. He had entirely lost the use of his legs, although his hands were still at his own disposal; and his eyes, by their excess of vivacity, seemed sufficient to make up for the immobility of all the rest of his body together. He was in the midst of one of his burlesque stories, and, although evidently a prey to disease, appeared to be an absolute personification of good-humoured mirth.

The other persons of the company, to the great surprise of the strangers, presented nothing whatever of the comic or eccentric in their appearance; and had the scene been laid in the Louvre instead of "old Scarron's" house in the Rue d'Enfer, they would

have had no difficulty in believing themselves to be surrounded by the court.

"Who is that?" whispered Frederic, looking towards a very elegant and sentimental-looking person, leaning abstractedly on the back of a chair.

"That is Antoine de la Sablière," replied M. de Meré, "who is in love with his wife, and vies with the Marquis de la Fare and La Fontaine in writing madrigals in her praise. Beside him stands Hainault, the translator of Lucretius, who is talking to that great broad-faced, lackadaisical individual, Des Guetaux, the pastoral poet. The latter is the homo who cleared a whole district of its astonished and terrified population, by skulking about the plains for an entire summer, furnished with a crook, and a pipe, and a sword, and a court jacket, in order to qualify himself for writing about sheep. There is the Abbé Tetu, exchanging impromptus with the Duke of Vironne. The Abbé, you may see, is looking every moment towards the door, in expectation of the entrance of the ladies. He is miserable in the society of men—except when listening to their love secrets, and on these occasions he is really a useful creature, for he will fetch and carry like a very Pandarus, without expecting the smallest bit for his trouble. There is the Count de Grammont, his friend Matta, and his pen Hamilton. The last is good for nothing till he is put to paper—but then how he skips! La Fontaine, there in the corner, is about to read some of his fables; but he may shut the book, for by the pricking up of the Abbé's ears, I guess the women are just coming." At the moment the door opened, and a number of ladies bounded gracefully into the room. They were all closely masked, and preserved a profound silence, as the jest consisted in the length of time for which they should be able to keep the gentlemen in doubt as to their identity.

The two young men were greatly delighted with the gaiety and freedom of this to them unusual kind of society. They were surrounded by some of the choicest spirits of the age; and they saw them bound from their places on the entrance of the ladies, and

rush towards them with all the boisterous enjoyment of boyhood, tempered by all the gallantry of Frenchmen.

"There is the beautiful La Sablière," said M. de Meré, who seemed to look through the masks as their wearers passed; "her husband has seized upon the Countess de la Saze, thinking her his wife; whilst Madame de Sévigné, taken for the same lady by the Marquis de la Fare, is quizzing the unhappy lover unmercifully in a feigned voice. I wish we could hear her—never was a better coquette spoiled by discretion. There sails Ninon de l'Enclos. She is the most virtuous—hem!—in Europe; and, as St. Evremont has wittily said, possesses all the good qualities of an honest man. Look at Mademoiselle de Scuderi——"

"For Heaven's sake!" interrupted the two young men in the same breath, "who is that?"

"That! What is that to you?" said De Meré, and rushing up to the lady who had attracted their attention, he took hold of her by both hands, and led her away in the most familiar and confidential manner. She was tall and elegantly formed—and she wore a black mask.

"It is my incognita!" said Waldenstein—"I would know her among a thousand."

"It is my Françoise!" exclaimed Frederic, "I would claim her against a million." The two friends, for the first time in their lives, looked fiercely in one another's faces, and then walked away abruptly to different sides of the room.

The ladies at length unmasked; La Fontaine proceeded with his fable; Ninon and her lover for the time being, Villarteaux, sang and played; La Sablière, and the poets Charleval and Montreuil, recited madrigals; Grammont and Matta told a facetious story apiece; and Coulanges and Marigny began a lively duet. The black mask, however, was absent; and Frederic wandered in search of her into another room in the same suite. Suddenly he heard her voice, as he passed a tall screen which was set up near the door to guard against the draught of air, and with it, the rough hoarse tones of a man, which he recognised as those of M. Scarron.

Conceiving this to be a favourable opportunity for a formal introduction to his mistress as the Chevalier de Belcour, he advanced to make the request to his host ; but while just about to turn the corner of the screen, he was startled by a sound of weeping behind it.

"That is enough," said the buffoon poet, in a voice of real, not affected pathos. "Your tears tell me that your excellent friend and tutor, the Chevalier de Meré, is right. You must be miserable, as you are at present ; and, under the care of that wretched Madame de Neuillant, you would be more miserable still. There is no alternative ;—you must marry or go into a convent. Come, make me your confidant."

"I have no confidence to entrust you with, my ever kind friend," said the mask, her voice interrupted by tears. "I have no proposals—no lovers ; I cannot marry ; and I have no friends to pay for my admission to a convent." Frederic's heart beat as if it would break its prison ; and he was only withheld from running forward and throwing himself at her feet by the consideration that his abrupt appearance might alarm rather than reassure her.

"Mademoiselle," said M. Scarron, after having considered for a moment, "I hope you will not think me too blunt ; but you know I do not affect refinement. In a word, if you determine upon taking the veil, I will pay the expenses of your admission ; if you prefer matrimony, I will marry you myself ! But do not misunderstand me. You know what I am ; a thing made up of smiles and misery—a cracked instrument, that instead of the deepened tones of music, emits only tuneless shrieks of laughter. I can offer you nothing but a small fortune, and a disabled and paralytic friend. You shall be my daughter under the name of wife, for I have no other means of adopting you ; and I shall look to you for nothing more tender than the cares of a nurse." It would be difficult to say whether Françoise or Frederic felt the more surprise at this proposal ; but the hesitation of the lady did not last for many moments. Frederic heard her kiss the hand of the invalid, while she replied in a steady and resolute voice—

"I accept your proposal, my honoured friend, as frankly as it

has been made ; and it shall be the study of my life, by my attention to your affairs, and the tenderest care of your person, to evince my gratitude for a generosity so noble and so disinterested." Frederic knew not what followed ; the place seemed to go round ; and for some minutes he was wholly insensible both to sight and sound. When he recovered his recollection, he saw Françoise standing before him unmasked, and gazing with a look of mingled surprise and curiosity in his face.

"Do I know you?" said she. "Are you a shadow? are you a dream?"

"I am the goatherd of the farm De Neuillant," gasped the lover, "your companion and friend of more than two months—I am the Chevalier de Belcour: I too have had my ancestors, and misfortunes, and degradations!" Mademoiselle d'Aubigné smiled gravely.

"I am glad," said she, "my brother in the miseries of the world, to meet with you again, since we meet so. I entreat you to forget, if you have not already forgotten, my rudeness at our last meeting ; and believe me, it is long since I have thought with anything harsher than a smile, of the simplicity of your inexperience, or without a prayer and a sigh, of your brotherlike kindness, when all others were cold and silent. I am changed, although you do not think so!"

"Mademoiselle," said the chevalier, with a solemn earnestness which commands attention even in a boy, "I too am changed in all things, except my sentiments regarding you. I am no longer a child in feelings ; I am no longer as a straw dancing in the wind of circumstances. I feel stirring within me that which destiny is made of—by which it is controlled ; and I want only a worthy ambition to nerve and stimulate me. Your image has never been absent from my soul since we parted ; you have been the guiding star of my hope, and the saving star of my despair ; you have been the cause and the motive both of my daring and endurance. Continue, O Françoise, to be the patroness of my existence——"

"Hush ! hush !" interrupted Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, "this is too late ! I dare not listen to the ravings of a young and generous

heart, which it would be as dishonourable in me to deceive, as it is impossible to reward."

"Say not so," cried the young man with vehemence; "I know your situation: I have been an ear-witness, although unintentionally, of your compact with M. Scarron, and I am aware of what were its causes and motives on both sides. This is what makes me so bold; I demand nothing more than that you allow yourself a brief space for reflection. I am young, it is true, but I am the fitter to struggle with the world; and I am poor, but a commission either in the French or Dutch service is at my command."

"I cannot listen to you; my word is passed; my honour is engaged——"

"But if M. Scarron himself—he is a man of sense and reflection, in spite of his gaiety, and his motives for desiring a union so absurdly incongruous are honourable and praiseworthy—if he, I say—if he himself, on explanation, should be inclined to waive his pretensions——" At the moment the company gathered round, imagining from the earnestness of the speaker, and the unconscious by-play of the listener, that they were performing a scene in a comedy, and Françoise gliding among the crowd, disappeared. Her exit, however, was not made so suddenly but that she had time to throw a glance upon her lover, which spoke volumes of meaning to his heart; and he determined to proceed to an immediate explanation with his host, which he had no doubt would end satisfactorily to all parties.

Françoise had retired for the night; but it would have been worse than useless to have followed her before coming to a clear understanding with M. Scarron. Frederic waited in vain for an opportunity of speaking in private to the eccentric poet. He was by this time placed, with the assistance of the servants, at the supper table; and if a messenger had burst into the room to tell him that the house was on fire, he would have turned the information into a joke, and the company would have laughed at it.

The mirth and wit that reigned at this board of festive freedom were lost upon the anxious lover. In vain the songs of Ninon sweetened the air; in vain the *bons mots* of Matta flew round the

table; dull, heavy, and preoccupied, he sat gazing, without eating or drinking, speaking or listening, into the face of the merry host. One by one the company retired, but Frederic's obstinacy was not to be conquered, he still kept his seat, and at last, when he found himself alone with M. Scarron, he had the satisfaction of seeing the wearied entertainer fall fast asleep in his chair. The remonstrances, both verbal and manual, of the guest were of no avail; and the servants assured him that no power on earth could awake their master—except that of the gout; and that, even if this was successfully exerted, he would not listen to the Pope himself, but continue singing and blaspheming all night long where he lay.

The next morning, at as early an hour as Frederic thought his mistress would be stirring, he stole softly past the bedchamber of his friend, which was in the same corridor, and walked hastily to her obscure lodgings, the site of which he had taken care to ascertain from M. Scarron's servants.

“It is all very well as it has happened,” thought he, walking along; “if I had spoken to M. Scarron, even in his coolest moments, it is more than probable that he would have felt too much resentment at the interference of a stranger in so delicate an affair, to listen calmly to my proposal. It is yet early. I shall have time to prove to Françoise that Martinique slavery would be blessedness compared to the fate to which she thinks of devoting herself, and to concert measures with her for escaping from the dilemma.”

He ran nimbly up the broken staircase. Some person was before him, and just about to knock at Mademoiselle d'Aubigné's door.

“Waldenstein!” cried Frederic, half in doubt, owing to the darkness of the passage, and half unwilling to credit his eyes.

“Monsieur le Chevalier!” replied Ernest; and the two friends stood for some moments eyeing one another in silence. An altercation at last ensued, rendered longer and perhaps bitterer by the embarrassments of their late friendship; and Ernest, whose lively temper was held in no check by the considerations of gratitude which weighed upon his companion, drew his sword. Frederic

was not slow in replying to a signal which he could not misunderstand, and their two weapons struck fire as they clashed together.

At this moment the old servant of the Waldensteins rushed out of his room, and threw himself between the combatants.

"Madmen!" cried he, "what are you about? Is it for *her* you fight?" and he pointed to the door of the apartment. "Be assured, she is far above you both; for I have seen queens in my day, and I know the mark on the royal brow! At all events you lose your time here, for a lady called in a carriage an hour ago, and carried her away."

"What was the lady's name?" demanded Frederic hastily.

"I heard some one call her Madame de Neuillant." This was enough; he sheathed his sword, and ran frantically to the hotel for his horse. He spurred at full gallop through the crowded streets, till he reached M. Scarron's house.

"Is Madame de Neuillant here?" he inquired.

"No, Monsieur."

"Is she in Paris?"

"No, Monsieur; she has returned to her farm De Neuillant."

"Alone?"

"No, Monsieur; with her niece." Frederic spurred on.

It was nearly midday before he reached his destination. The door was opened by old Veronica.

"Is Madame de Neuillant at home?" he inquired.

"Eh? What, you are here again, are you? I told you that Madame d'Aubigné was dead, and where she was to be found."

"My dear Veronica, it is Mademoiselle I want!"

"Eh? Mademoiselle? Having a little cold just now——"

"Wretch! lead me to your mistress;" and he rushed past her into the house, and bounced into a room where two ladies were sitting at dinner.

"Madame de Neuillant," said he, "I beg your pardon; but business of the utmost importance compels me to ask, without more ceremony, where is your niece?"

"There is my niece." Frederic sank almost senseless into a chair.

"Mademoiselle d'Aubigné?" said he faintly.

"Ah, ungrateful hussy!" exclaimed Madame de Neuillant; "she must have been married nearly half an hour ago—and, would any human being think it? without even asking my advice and consent! This comes of charity to one's relations! this comes of tenderness of heart! But the world shall know that if I give Paul Scarron no dowry with my niece, it is her fault, not mine."

It was almost evening when Frederic checked his almost foundered horse in the midst of a full gallop, at the gate of M. Scarron's house. To throw himself from the saddle, and to climb the stairs and burst into the room, seemed to take but a single instant. The unusual noise of his entrance made the splendid party turn round. The bride started from her chair by the side of her husband, and her eyes encountered those of her lover. A slight and momentary paleness overspread her face; but recovering in an instant, she advanced a few paces and made a calm and dignified obeisance to the entering guest. Frederic felt as if he would have sunk into the ground as he bowed in reply; and the next moment he hastily retired.

In the morning he and his friend Waldenstein met in the salle, to all appearance as if nothing had happened.

"Do you ride to-day?" asked Ernest, in an indifferent tone.

"I see your horse is standing saddled at the gate."

"Yes," replied Frederic, "I am for Spain. There is famous work going on there, they tell me; and I am weary of dependence, and ashamed of my increasing obligations to your family."

"Oh, as for the obligations, they are all on our side; I beg you will not mention them! Fine weather."

"Very fine. Adieu."

"Adieu." And so the two friends parted, who were not destined to meet for many years.

CHAPTER III.

Tell us this. Have you anything to take to ?
Nothing but my fortune.

SHAKESPEARE.

NOT for many years, it has been said, were the friends destined to meet again. The interval must be like one of those blanks in history which young readers, unwilling to part with the personages who have taken hold of their imagination, strive to fill up by conjecture, when sitting round a Christmas fire. Waldenstein returned to Holland and to trade. He lost and won fortunes; he filled city offices; he married a burgomaster's daughter; he dandled his own children on his knee; filled his pipe with tobacco of his own importing; and sometimes saw rising dimly upon his waking dream, through the smoke, the air-built castles of his youth, and the shadowy forms of Belcour and the beautiful Françoise.

As for the chevalier, he was a soldier. He beat, and was beaten; he wounded, and received wounds; he lost blood, and gained glory; he suffered hunger, and thirst, and cold, and heat, and toil; he enjoyed ease, and abundance, and amusement, and honour; he loved, and laughed, and wept; he marched and countermarched, driving through one country, and being driven through another;—in fine, he returned to Paris, almost as poor in gold as he had left it, but rich in the renown of a captaincy—his expression sobered by time, and thought, and vicissitude, and his brow scarred with the marks that are termed honourable, apparently because they are received for hire.

Frederic had loved frequently, and his heart had been broken over and over again many times; but he was still unmarried. He had never, in the course of his peregrinations, visited Holland, nor had he heard a syllable about his old friends and patrons in that country. Even Ernest's sister, the fair young Agnes, must have long ago been ripe enough for transplanting, and was perhaps ere now a wife and a mother. As for Madame Scarron the

last news he had heard respecting her was, that her husband had died, and left her in great distress and poverty. Why had he not flown back on the wings of love and renewed hope as soon as intelligence so interesting reached his ear? Alas, alas! because Frederic was not a hero of romance! He was no longer a stripling, flitting about the brink of the current of the business of life, but a man, engaged in the conflict of the waters, striving against the storm, and steadying himself in the tide.

As soon, however, as he did reach Paris, he hastened to the Rue d'Enfer with a feeling of deep interest, to use no stronger expression. The house had fallen into decay, and a crowd of the lower grades of society had built their mud hovels among the ruins. To them Madame Scarron was unknown, except by name. They could only tell, that she had been applying, and in vain, to the proud King Louis for the continuance of a paltry pension enjoyed by her husband; and that, when her hopes had failed her, she had retired from a house then too large for her means. Frederic had little time allowed him to prosecute his inquiries. His regiment was one of those that had been draughted from other places to swell the pomp of war against Holland; and he received orders almost immediately to continue his march.

All was gaiety in Paris. The very lowest of the people seemed to feel that they lived under a King to whom royalty would have been tasteless without the trappings of its splendour. Neighbours feasted one another on tables spread in the open street; wine flowed from fountains at every corner; and even brandy, which was formerly used exclusively as one of the poisons, which the faculty term medicines, was now permitted to be retailed in stalls as a poison for the people, under its own name. The "carrousel" of the court far exceeded in splendour the tournaments of earlier times. At these the King appeared publicly, with all the crown diamonds sparkling on his person and on that of his horse; and the mimicry of chivalry was witnessed by half the beauties of the world, seated under triumphal arches.

At Versailles, the scene was still more magnificent. The lists for running at the ring were placed as if by enchantment. On

one occasion, the cavalcade of great personages was followed by a gilt car eighteen feet high, fifteen broad, and twenty-four long, representing the chariot of the Sun. The four Ages, of gold, silver, brass, and iron—the celestial Signs—the Seasons, and the Hours, followed this car on foot. All were distinctly characterised. Shepherds carried the materials for the enclosures, which were placed and adjusted to the sound of trumpets, mingled at intervals with that of violins and other instruments. The attendants of Apollo's car opened the festival of gallantry by reciting verses adapted to the scene and persons.

When the night came on, the spot chosen for the feast was lighted by four thousand large flambeaux; and the tables were served by two hundred persons, representing the seasons, the fauns, sylvans, and dryades, with shepherds, grape-gatherers, and reapers. Pan and Diana advanced upon a moving mountain, and descended to place upon the board the luxuries of the woods and plains. Behind the tables, in a semicircle, rose up all at once a theatre filled with musical performers in concert. The arcades which surrounded the table and theatre were decorated with five hundred chandeliers; and a gilt balustrade ran round the vast circuit.*

The pavilions of Marly were constructed on the same scale of magnificence, to which was added a peculiarly fine and delicate attention on the part of the King; for each of the lady visitors found in the apartment allotted to her a complete toilette, in which nothing was found wanting that could minister to the purposes of convenience and luxury.

The Chevalier de Belcour, the day before renewing his march, having received an invitation, owing to the good offices of a friend, not only to witness, but to partake of a royal entertainment of rather a peculiar nature, given at Chantilly, repaired in due time to the scene of festivity. The soldier was greatly surprised by a degree of splendour which he had never before even imagined. It was early in the evening when he arrived, but the company were

already wandering through the magnificent walks. Among these, not the least remarkable were the shady alleys which led through a grove of orange-trees ; and Frederic was almost surprised for a moment into the idea that magic had been really concerned in the miracle. On leaning, however, on the palisades, which were breast high, and interwoven with jasmine and tuberose, he discovered that those aromatic fruits were planted in vases, and did not, as they appeared to do, spring naturally out of the ground in a climate so different from their own. Farther on, an ancient wood of lofty moss-grown trees stood severe and solemn in the midst of these beautiful frivolities of art.

The evening was deliciously mild but dark ; for the sky was covered with clouds, and the company began to long for the illuminations. Presently their wishes were fulfilled, at least in the spirit ; for the full round moon, throwing aside the curtains that had encumbered her, came forth in light and beauty. Her appearance was hailed by a concert, which carried one back in fancy to the adorations of the Sabeans. A burst of music seemed to shake the air of the forest ; and, when it had sunk into silence, a solitary blast of the horn sounded, and was echoed, in measured time, from various points of the scene. Another flourish of loftier music rose suddenly up, in which were mingled the voices of all the known instruments both of war and peace ; and, as if conjured by the sound, a noble stag, followed by a body of huntsmen glittering with gold and gems, and led on by the King in person, flashed past like some pageant of apparitions. The forest rang with the acclamations of the moonlight chase ; and many of the spectators, in spite of the laws of the strictest etiquette that ever was known in Europe, excited almost to phrensy, could not hold for their lives from rushing helter-skelter after.

The chase was at length over ; the hunters returned, and the festive tables were set out on places strewn with jonquils, on a carpet, and under canopies of purple and gold. At the table of the King, who piqued himself on his devotion to the fair sex, the ladies were waited upon by the gentlemen, and Louis himself stood behind the chair of Madame de Montespan. The specta-

tors were permitted to walk round the exhibition; and in the meantime songs and music wiled away the hours.

It was almost midnight. The tables became thinner, and the dark walks more crowded; and the Chevalier de Belcour, following the example of many of his neighbours, rose up, and strolled forth to enjoy the coolness of the hour. All on a sudden, a blaze of light arose from the forest, that seemed to extinguish the moon, and even when dying away, it left innumerable specks of brilliance hanging like gems upon the trees. A second discharge of fireworks took place; and the lamps being completely lighted up, the whole scene was as clear as day.

While admiring the magical effect of the illuminations, Frederic was struck by the figure of a lady in one of the numerous parties promenading along the walks. He could not see her face, as she was before him; but her gait and manner reminded him immediately of his lost *Françoise*. The ideas of romance, suggested by the scene around him, probably lent new force to his recollections; the last years of his history passed away from his memory like a dream; and the things and persons of his early youth stood before him, in that enchanted light, with all the vividness of reality.

He endeavoured, by walking past the object of his interest, and then suddenly returning, to obtain a view of her face; but it so happened that, as often as he approached her, she diverged into one of the numerous alleys, and thus baffled his attempt. Frederic at last perceived that the manœuvre was intentional on the part of the lady; and he mentally resolved not to leave Chantilly till he had seen her face. Affecting to weary of a prudery which the phantom herself must have known to be apparent, he turned away with a slight laugh, and lounged to another part of the walks. As soon, however, as he was out of her sight, he darted round by another avenue, so as to meet her in front. His stratagem was successful. On turning swiftly a corner of the palisade, he found himself both in visible and tangible contact with the object of his pursuit, who wore a black mask.

This circumstance was not uncommon, as many of the ladies

had masked in defence of their beauty against the night air, and many more in that voluptuous court, from motives of gallantry ; but it served to identify the full formed, and almost majestic figure before him with that of the slighter but not more beautiful image enshrined in his memory.

"Madame," said he, "I trust you will forgive me—but you bear a resemblance to one whom I would fain see once more, before leaving this country, perhaps for ever. Is it too much in a stranger—if such I am—to request that you will allow me to see your face?"

Françoise, after a moment's hesitation, removed her mask ; and Frederic started back, like one who has cast suddenly upon the noonday sun a look which had been accustomed to dwell only on its dawning brightness. Her beauty had reached the precise point of maturity beyond which is decay, however gradual, and before which is unripeness, however bewitching. Time had just touched the portrait sufficiently to mellow the expression, without robbing the tints of one ray of brilliance. Her dark eyes were full of soul, where before there had been only fire ; and her lip, which was wont to move and glisten, was now tranquil and almost heavy, as if slumbrously enjoying its own velvet richness.

There was a lurking beam of triumph, notwithstanding, which Frederic discovered in those beautiful eyes, schooled to mildness both by feeling and sorrow ; and while he gazed, a slight but scarcely perceptible curl of the lip might have indicated to a close observer the existence, however momentary, of that feeling of pride, unallied to greatness, which agitates the breast of beauty at the spectacle of some deep and unequivocal devotion to her charms. But if such feelings really existed, they soon fled, at least in their external phenomena ; and, with a look and tone of kindness which went to the heart of the listener, she addressed him in one of the forms of salutation used by old acquaintances on their meeting again on the earth.

"It is then, indeed," said she, "my early friend ! And how fares it with you in your pilgrimage ? What prize have you drawn in the lottery of the world ?"

"Françoise," said Frederic, "it fares not well with me; and as yet I have drawn nothing but blanks—blanks—blanks. You, too, have been unhappy, if I must believe report, in spite of which that face is radiant with beauty and content. You were left in poverty, they say, by your husband; and you solicited in vain from the King a continuance of his small pension."

"It is true," replied Françoise calmly; "but I have now obtained my wish. The amount is trifling, yet adequate to my desires."

"My success," said Frederic, seizing her hand as if by an uncontrollable impulse, "small as it is, has perhaps been greater than yours. Françoise, it is my firm belief that, but for one of the most trivial circumstances in the whole catalogue of human events, you would have been at this hour a sharer of my fortunes, be they what they may! Tell me, thou whom I have never ceased to love since your beauty first made a heaven of my heart ——"

"Hush! hush! hush!" cried Françoise; "this is madness!" and, withdrawing her hand and her eyes, she retreated some steps from her lover. The next moment, however, her eyes rested again upon him, and with a glance filled with almost tender hesitation; but suddenly, as a sound met her ear in the distance, she looked hurriedly along the path, and her expression altered. Her eyes waxed bright, her cheek flushed, her lips grew rigid, and her whole frame seemed to expand.

Frederic followed the direction of her look, and saw advancing, at some distance, a man whose air, by its extraordinary assumption of importance, conveyed at first an idea almost of the ludicrous. As the stranger came nearer, however, his majestic and noble-looking person rendered graceful in him what in any other would have seemed the effect of an eccentric vanity; and even the loftiness of his figure, and the breadth of his shoulders, conspired, as it were, to give warrant for a dignity of deportment just touching upon extravagance. His limbs were exquisitely well turned—a circumstance which the fashion of his dress rendered sufficiently obvious; and the delicate conformity with which they were adapted to a body which no one could have pronounced to be

either too stout or too slender, gave an unusual air of finish to the portrait. His hair was black, and his lips florid and singularly bright. His glance was irresistibly penetrating, and, together with his lofty presence, had the effect of intimidating the person he looked at. For the rest, he was marked, but slightly, with the smallpox; and his face, upon the whole, although exhibiting a fair proportion of good features, was rather commanding than handsome.

Before Frederic could note all these details of a figure which seemed at once to attract and overawe scrutiny, Françoise had moved hastily away. Her lover followed, half in shame and half in indignation; but striking smartly the arm of a man who passed at the moment—

"M. Vatel," said she, "I am surprised! This gentleman has been complaining that there was no such thing as *roti* at the supper-table!" She then walked on, and the person addressed stood still, bending a glance of horror and amazement upon the chevalier.

The dignified stranger by this time passed by; and Frederic saw him, as he reached Françoise, who appeared to have slackened her pace, put his hand to his hat. Presently, he seemed to recognise her, and stopping to speak, he uncovered quite, and stood with his hat in his hand.

"Sir, what gentleman is that?" asked the chevalier, addressing the person whom Françoise had called M. Vatel.

"No *roti*!" ejaculated he in a voice of despair.—"Sir, may I solicit the honour of your permission to inquire whether you did not jest with the lady?"

"Tell me first who that gentleman is, and I will then answer your question."

"Pshaw! that is only the King.—Did you actually say no *roti*?"

"The King! The widow Scarron! The poultry-girl!"

"N—n—no *roti*?"

"*Roti*! What is it you inquire? There was assuredly no *roti* at the table where I supped, nor at the one next it; but the

rest of the twenty-five I had no opportunity of observing, and I did not even obtain a sight of the royal table."

"No roti at *two* tables! I am lost! I am dishonoured for ever! Oh Vatel, Vatel, thy glory is departed from thee!" and the Prince's chief cook slapped his forehead, and hurried distractedly away. The affair of the roti by no means ended here; for after Frederic had walked about for some time, in perplexity about equal to Vatel's, he saw the latter standing in an attitude of despair under a tree, while the Duke his master, in person, and the cook Gourville, were attempting to comfort him.

"It was excellent!" said the Prince; "nothing could have gone better; his Majesty's supper was allowed by every one to be the most admirable thing that ever was seen."

"Your Highness's goodness," replied Vatel, "completes my unhappiness. I am sensible the roti was wanting at two tables!" Some time after, Frederic saw the unhappy cook watching anxiously the return of the purveyors, whom he expected with fish, having despatched persons for that purpose to all the sea-ports.

"What!" said he, "is this all?" as two loads came in at the gate.

"Yes, Sir," replied the purveyor, thinking that it was only his own proportion that was referred to—"this is all."

"Only two loads of fish! I am overwhelmed—annihilated! I cannot stand this! It is impossible to outlive such repeated disgrace"—and he rushed into the house. Frederic, even in the midst of his own embarrassments, was half surprised and half amused by so singular a display of sensibility; but there was something in Vatel's eye, as he retreated, which was too alarming to be smiled at, and he followed him hastily. He was too late; the cook had locked himself into a room, and Frederic heard a low, dull sound, which his practised ear recognised as that produced by the stab of a sword in the human body. Before he could burst open the door, it was repeated three times; and when at last he succeeded in forcing an entrance, he saw the illustrious Vatel lying dead upon the floor.*

* Madame de Sevigné.

The Chevalier de Belcour arrived at Paris just in time to set out at the proper hour with his regiment for Holland. All the world knows the history of this famous Dutch expedition, which is, on more accounts than one, among the most remarkable military enterprises on record. The Parisians took leave of their friends, as if they were going to execution. "Good heavens!" exclaims Madame de Sevigné, "what a war it is likely to be! the most bloody and dangerous one, according to all accounts, that has taken place since the passage of Charles VIII. into Italy. It is truly an astonishing enterprise." Nothing, we are told, was heard but the sound of weeping throughout the whole court.

In the meantime, the preparations were on a scale of splendour and magnitude which seemed singularly well fitted to dissipate such apprehensions. The French and English fleets had joined forces, the former consisting of thirty fifty-gun ships, and the latter of a hundred sail. By land, the army, under the command of the Prince of Condé, Marshal Turenne, and the Duke of Luxembourg, marched one hundred and twelve thousand men. There never had been seen before in the field so magnificent and well-disciplined a body of troops. Martinet, who has left his name to all succeeding disciplinarians, had drilled the infantry almost into the perfection of the present day; and instead of the spears, which continued greatly in use, had put into the hands of some regiments, as their regular weapon, the deadly and desperate bayonet. The Chevalier de Fouilles had done nearly as much for the cavalry. The generals were the greatest in Europe; the soldiers were the bravest and best paid. The funds of the expedition were ample, even to extravagance. What more could Louis XIV. have done to fix upon his own glory, and that of France, the admiring gaze of posterity? He carried with him a historiographer to write his conquests.

The Dutch army consisting in the whole only of twenty-five thousand bad soldiers, the Prince of Orange was unable to take the field, and the French crossed the Rhine in triumph. They were received by a cry for mercy from two foot regiments, who had laid down their arms; but so great was the valour of the

invaders, that the young Duke of Longueville (who happened to be tipsy) crying out "Give the scoundrels no quarter!" shot one of their officers dead with his pistol. On seeing this, the two regiments of Dutch caught up their arms in desperation, and gave battle to the host. Blood was shed on both sides, and among other losses, the French had to lament that of the valiant Duke himself.

When this celebrated passage was effected, everything became easy. One after another, the provinces of Utrecht, Overysse, and Guelders were reduced; and the fall of Amsterdam was hourly expected to put the seal to the fate of Holland. In this dreadful predicament, the States sued for peace; but the terms offered them being only such as the pride of insanity could propose, or the meanness of slavery accept, the glorious Hollanders rose up in their wrath and desperation, and tearing open the sluices of their dykes, called in the assistance of the sea to preserve their freedom.

The torrent rolled far over the land. The cattle were drowned in their pastures; and the peasant saw without a murmur his little possessions floating away. Stern, silent, and alone, Amsterdam stood, a city of the ocean, with her navies riding above the fields, where but yesterday her young children had played. Then came famine into her dwellings, and the pangs of thirst, which the sight of the bitter waters of the sea only rendered more terrible. What of that? Amsterdam was still free; and the rush and roar of her native element, and the voice of the winds, as they swept over its bosom, seemed like the music of heaven to her ear.

No farther conquests could be made in a country which was under water; but when the winter came on, and highways of ice were formed over the surface of the sea, the struggle recommenced. The Chevalier de Belcour was at this time in garrison at Utrecht, where the Duke of Luxembourg commanded. Frederic had more than once refused promotion, for the purpose of remaining in the district in which was situated the village of Bodegrave. Any danger, he knew, to which it might be exposed, would proceed from Utrecht; and he determined to embrace the

present as the only opportunity that might perhaps ever be in his power, of making a return for the kindnesses he had received from the family of Waldenstein, by watching over the preservation of their lives and property.

An expedition of a very singular and daring description was now planned by General Luxembourg; and Frederic eagerly enlisted himself as a volunteer, partly in the idea that their march might be through Bodegrave, and partly excited by the romantic nature of the enterprise. On a dark and freezing night, the General collected his troops, to the number of twelve thousand chosen men, the whole being provided with *skates*, and they set forth over the ice to surprise the Hague. When they left Utrecht, it was clear frosty weather, and the effect of the moon and stars upon the even sheet of ice, over which they swept like a breeze, was truly magical. By degrees, as they advanced, the visible horizon of earth was obscured by vapour, and they could see nothing around, above, or beneath them, but a circular expanse of ice, bounded at the edge by thick grey clouds, and canopied by the starry curtain of the sky.

The strange groaning sound which ever and anon boomed along the frozen wilderness, had at first something inexpressibly terrific to the imagination; and as it died fitfully away in the distance the space surrounding them seemed extended almost to infinity. The sky at length was gradually covered by the vapours rising, as if from the edges of the circle of earth; a veil of dull and hazy white overspread the heavens and obscured the stars; and a dim round spot of watery brightness was the only indication of the site of the moon, by which alone they could now steer their course.

A rapid thaw had come on; their skates sunk deeper and deeper into the ice at every sweep; and at last, the water gathering upon the surface, as it was agitated by the night-wind that had now risen, assumed the appearance of a sea. The wind increased, the sky grew blacker and blacker, their footing became more spungy and insecure; they plunged almost to the knee, and the ice groaned and cracked beneath them. Every one looked upon himself as lost; and the horrors of a fate hitherto untold in story, and

appearing to belong neither to the fortunes of the land nor of the sea, appalled the boldest imagination.

At length a faint twinkling light appeared in the distance, sometimes seen and sometimes lost, in the varying atmosphere; and they had the satisfaction, such as it was, of at least knowing the relative bearings of the place on which they were about to perish. The light proceeded from a strong fort in the enemy's hands, impregnable without cannon; and what added bitterness to their misery was the knowledge that beyond this fort was a dyke, which in all probability afforded a path, however narrow and muddy, by which they could have returned to Utrecht. The fort, however, was the gate to this avenue of safety; and, even if they had possessed the requisite means of siege, if it was defended for a single day, they would either be swallowed up by the waters, in the continuance of the thaw, or perish miserably through cold and fatigue.

But anything was better than inaction. The water creeping insidiously around them was a deadlier enemy than stone walls or cannon-shot; and they determined at least to make a rush upon the immoveable masonry of the fort, and provoke the fire of its defenders. It is impossible to account for the result. It may have been that the sight of so large a body of men rushing in upon them, as if from the open sea, their numbers multiplied, and even their individual forms distorted and magnified in the mist, struck a panic terror into the hearts of the garrison; while this may have been increased by the shouts of courage or despair, booming wildly over the icy waste, and mingling like the voices of demons with the rising wind. But however it was, the gates of the fort opened at their approach, and the helpless and half-frozen adventurers rushed in without striking a blow.*

The conquerors being too numerous to receive proper accommodation within the walls, and at all events the ferocious general being desirous of rewarding his troops for the fatigues they had undergone, gave up to their mercy the village, or rather small

town of Bodegrave, which was in the immediate neighbourhood. Rending the air with their shouts of triumph and exultation, the fiend-like soldiery sallied forth in a body towards their prey ; and as the torches they carried, for the purpose of setting fire to the peaceful dwellings before them, flared in the wind, they must have seemed like a legion of demons rushing through the air upon some errand of hell.

Frederic, in the meantime, although the idea had never occurred to him of a ferocity hitherto unknown in this war, had proceeded alone to the village by a well-known path, as soon as the fort surrendered. The inhabitants were in bed, and he reached the house of the Waldensteins unobserved. He knew not how to give notice of his presence without creating alarm. He listened at the door, but all was silent, and then at the bedroom windows. Presently he was attracted by a sound, as if of some motion within, to a window which he remembered as the one belonging to the chamber of Agnes, the youngest daughter of the family ; and the soldier's heart was softened as he stood listening on a spot which had once been holy ground to his imagination.

Agnes, even more than her brother, had been his friend, his intimate, his associate ; and even at this moment his heart smote him, as he remembered the start and the flush with which she had been wont to listen to his confidences on the subject of that strange prestige, which had so long hung upon his thoughts. Their parting scene was before him—her pale cheek, and wild but tearless eye—her look, her last, long, strange look ! The sound was in his ears, which he had heard just after turning his back upon the house ; and he asked himself, as he did then, whether it had really been the voice of Agnes,—a cry of agony, which her girlish pride had repressed in his presence.

But what was this to him now ? How many years had passed since that parting ! Was she still alive ? Had she loved another ? Was she married ? A thousand such questions swept tumultuously across his mind, and he wondered at the agitation which they caused.

"Yes," said he at length, almost aloud ; "I will meet Agnes

first, if she be alive and in this house ! If she be dead, my voice will not disturb her ; if she be married, I have no ill designs that I need fear to awake her husband." He tapped gently at the window, and called her name in a low voice. In an instant, the window-curtain was withdrawn, the casement thrown open, and Agnes stood before him. Frederic's first impulse was to clasp her in his arms ; but he perceived that she was undressed, as if she had just risen out of bed, and he paused in wonder, and almost dismay.

Her beauty, since their parting, had ripened into its midsummer richness ; but her cheek seemed as pale and cold as statuary marble. She advanced slowly and silently to the window, fixing upon him a look which froze his blood, he knew not why.

"Agnes !" said he at length faintly, while a thrill, resembling that of superstitious terror, ran through his heart.

"Frederic, I come !"—Frederic trembled, for the tone was not like that of a living being.

"You have tarried long," she continued, her voice dying almost to a whisper ; "but I knew you would come at last ! Chide me not, dearest, for it is the weakness of my sex which chills my veins, and shakes my soul to its foundation. Oh, Frederic ! stand from between me and the moon, that at this awful moment I may see the light of heaven !"

"Agnes ! Agnes !" cried he, in a kind of delirium.

"Frederic, I come !" She leant out of the window, and he opened his arms. He would have spoken : but, oppressed with an indefinite horror, his lips moved without being able to articulate a sound.

"I come !" she shrieked aloud—"spirit of my Frederic, I come !" and sunk lifeless in his arms.

The noise awoke the rest of the family, and Ernest Waldenstein was the first to rush into his sister's chamber. A few words were sufficient to explain the circumstances of this strange meeting ; and Agnes having been consigned to the care of the other females, Frederic was admitted into the house.

The first salutations of the friends were scarcely over, when they

were startled by a confused noise of shouts and screams from the village ; and on opening a window in alarm, they saw the glare of the already burning houses illumining the sky. The practised soldier was not long of discovering the meaning of the disturbance ; and, in perplexity mingled with terror, he began to barricade the house. He was aware that, whatever effect his entreaties might have had with the general, neither his personal influence nor his rank in the army would be of much avail on an occasion like this. The flames continued to spread, till the street at a little distance from the windows was seen as clearly as at noon-day ; and the scene presented became such as is too horrible for description. Everywhere women were seen flying almost naked from the brutal and now intoxicated soldiery ; and when their kinsmen rushed to their protection, they were massacred before their eyes.

Nearer and nearer swept the flames, and rolled the tumult ; till at last the Waldenstein family could recognise the voices of their neighbours in the screams of terror, or the bursts of rage and execration. The troops, maddened by wine, were now in such a state, that the command even of their general would have been disregarded ; and Frederic, aware that the house, barricaded as it was, could not stand an attack for ten minutes, promptly resolved upon flight. The first blow struck upon the door by the military assassins was the signal for departure ; and the family, headed by Frederic, who remembered the way distinctly, left the house by the back windows, and set out upon their journey over the midnight ice to the nearest town.

After suffering almost incredible hardships, the fugitives arrived at the Hague ; from whence Frederic transmitted a letter to General Luxembourg, explaining the causes of his absence, and stating in strong terms his reprobation of the unmanly and un-officer-like conduct of those, whoever they might be, who had given up to the rage of the ruffian soldiery a peaceful and un-offending village. He concluded by demanding, on the part of the Waldenstein family, a very large sum, at which they estimated their losses ; intimating his intention, in case of a refusal, to lay the affair before the King, who was well known to be averse, both

from policy and inclination, to atrocities so uncalled for and so shocking.

Luxembourg, without noticing in any manner the contents of his officer's letter, simply ordered him to return to his duty, and on his refusing to comply, found him guilty of desertion, and condemned him to death when taken. Such was the result of Frederic's military expedition into Holland.

Another great hiatus occurs in our history; and when we find its hero again, he is seated in a Dutch counting-house, staring moodily in the face of his partner, Ernest Waldenstein.

"Ruin," said he, "absolute, unavoidable ruin! We might still do well—ay, nobly, were it possible to temporize; but we must meet our engagements next month, or else give up all thoughts of contracting new ones. I see no help for it—we must shut the doors."

"So we must," replied Waldenstein, with mercantile apathy. "I will go back to Bodegrave, and live in a hut, where I had once a palace. And you?"

"I will return to the French army. Agnes and I shall set out for Paris instantly, where I will explain my conduct to the King in person, and solicit not only pardon, but an indemnification."

"Do so," said Waldenstein; "you can be of no use here, go at once, in God's name." The plan was soon completed; and Frederic and his wife prepared to leave Holland.

"If I should happen to see your incognita," said Frederic, in taking leave, "have you any message?" Waldenstein mused and smiled.

"She was a sweet creature," persisted Frederic, "that is the truth of it."

"Ay, ay! sugars have fallen!" said the merchant, and he went back into his counting-house.

The travellers had not proceeded far into France when they saw that, as Protestants, they could hope for no favour at the bigoted court of Louis XIV. The former edict of Nantz had been repealed, and everywhere the people were seen flying from the terrors of a conversion which was to be effected by fire and sword.

In the midst of these horrors the court was feasting at Versailles, with a splendour which would have excited the wonder of the most luxurious monarchs of Asia ; and Louis, while with one hand he signed a decree which inundated his country with blood and tears, with the other beckoned into their magical existence the paradises of Trianon and Marli. The marriages followed of some of the King's natural children, and added to the festivities of the time ; and it was in the midst of the rejoicings incidental on the union between the grandson of the great Condé and Mademoiselle de Nantz, daughter of Louis and Madame de Montespan, that Frederic and his wife entered Paris.

Promotion, or even reinstatement in the army, seemed now to be out of the question ; but the Chevalier determined, since he had come so far, not to leave the capital without at least bringing forward the claims of the Waldenstein family to an indemnification for their unmerited losses. This, he knew, had been granted to other individuals with a truly princely munificence ; and he hoped that the circumstance of one of the daughters being married to a French officer distinguished for his services, if not for his rank, would rather have a beneficial effect than otherwise on the suit of the Waldensteins.

He attended the court for some time on this business, without appearing to make any sensible progress, and no wonder ; for he knew not a human being among the crowd of sycophants and loose women by whom the throne was surrounded. At last, however, when just about to return in despair to Holland, he seemed to have made some impression, he knew not how, nor in what quarter. A gentleman called upon him several times to inquire into the particulars of his story, and warned him against leaving Paris before the affair was finally settled.

And it was at length settled, and in a manner that seemed to be quite incomprehensible. Besides an indemnification to the Waldensteins, greater than had been applied for, he received his pay since the period of what had been termed his desertion, together with a gratuity for his services, accompanied by a regular discharge from the army. Frederic at last found it impossible to

attribute his good fortune to anything but his own resplendent merit, while the discharge was set down to the circumstance of his being a Protestant. In this good opinion of himself he was confirmed by receiving, the next day, an invitation to attend the court at Marli, where it was understood that the King was about to make some small but graceful presents to those who had found favour in his eyes, in a mode which had been introduced by Cardinal Mazarin in the year 1656.

When the Chevalier and his lady entered the grand hall of Marli, the simple Agnes shrunk with a kind of terror at the magnificence which surrounded her. The company consisted of *grandees* of the highest rank in the kingdom, and several royal and noble foreigners. The four sides of the room were covered by superb decorations representing the four seasons of the year; and at each side there was a *shop* formed of canopies of silk and gold. The counters were loaded with the richest specimens in existence of Parisian art, chiefly in jewels, which the company drew by lot as they entered.

The first shop which our travellers stood to gaze at was kept by the Duke of Chartres and Madame de Thiange; who invited them, with true tradesmanlike civility, to walk in and look at their wares. In the next was the Duchess and Madame de Chevreux, the former being too young to keep shop with a man; and in the third stood, soliciting custom, the Dauphin of France and Madame de Montespan.

The travellers wandered on to the fourth shop, where the Duke of Maine, a son of the King, was joking and laughing with his friends who came to patronise him. His companion, they were told, was the Marchioness of Maintenon; but it was some time before they could see her face. They waited patiently, however, till she turned round, for it was here that they were to draw. The Marchioness was at last at liberty to attend to them, and Agnes desired her husband to produce the ticket. He did not answer; he scarcely seemed to breathe; he stood gazing at the face before him like a man in a dream, and at last passed his hand before his eyes, as if to drive away some spectral illusion. A strange smile,

which Agnes could not comprehend, lighted up the face of the Marchioness of Maintenon, while she said, in a low tone of voice—

"I need not ask this time how you have got on in the lottery of the world, for I see you have drawn a prize! Come, let us try what fortune will send you in the Lottery of Jewels;" and, without waiting for the ceremony of drawing, she threw round Agnes's neck a chain of gold and gems of extraordinary magnificence.

"Adieu," continued the Marchioness; "repair to the royal chapel on Sunday at noon, to return God thanks for the success of your mission, and on the following day leave Paris. Go; be good and be happy in the station allotted to you!"

When they had left the hall, Agnes's wonder and delight found vent in words.

"What a lovely—what an interesting—what a majestic woman!" cried she. "Where, when, and how did you know her?"

"In Martinique," said Frederic, lost in a reverie; "she was a forsaken girl—a poor little white slave, starved and beaten——"

"Surely you dream! you never were in Martinique. Tell me really where you knew her."

"On the farm De Neuillant, where she watched poultry from daybreak, and was thankful for a little fruit or cream, which I gave her to make up her coarse and scanty breakfast."

"Is it possible? and did you never see her again till now?"

"Yes. She was the wife, and then the widow, of the burlesque poet Scarron, soliciting a miserable pension from the charity of the King. Good heavens, what a world is this."

- On Sunday they went to the chapel, according to the Marchioness's desire, although with no intention of joining in the service, which their religion denounced as profane. The chapel was crowded with nobility, but neither royal party nor Madame de Maintenon had yet arrived; and the strangers employed the interval in asking questions respecting the localities of the place. Among other things supposed to be worthy of note, the pews of the Dauphiness and Princesses were pointed out to them, and those of the King and Queen, all of which were separate. The

Queen's, they were told, had never been opened since her death.

A stir was now heard indicative of the ceremony with which the earthly potentate was coming to pay his homage at the footstool of the King of Kings. Among the royal party, the splendid figure of Louis XIV. was conspicuous; and all eyes were withdrawn from the Cross and fixed upon the Prince. He walked majestically on, till he arrived at the Queen's pew, and with his own hands opened the door. The most extraordinary sensation was created among the courtiers by this action; and the rustle of robes and the catching of breaths were heard throughout the chapel like a sudden but momentary gust of wind. The next instant all was as hushed as death.

The King then led a lady by the hand into the pew of the royal consort, and she knelt upon the cushion. Few had observed her face, or if they had, believed their eyes; but when she rose up, it was seen that she was the Marchioness of Maintenon!

"Let us away," whispered Frederic, suddenly—"let us away, beloved Agnes, while I retain my senses! Let us go back to Holland, to our snug counting-house, which we are now so well able to keep open. Make haste—make haste; mercy on us! if the tide of fortune sets in this way, you and I may be caught up before we are aware, and set on a throne ourselves!"

THE END.

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